Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/dramas0000vict

Dessiné par G. Jacquet *Photogravure Goupil & Cie*

Dramas; Volumes One And Two

By Victor Hugo

With Full Page Illustrations

Published for Subscribers only by the
Book Collectors League New York

MS.
H37
v.1

PQ
2283
A3
1872
V.1

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
HERNANI	1
THE TWIN BROTHERS	93
ANGELO	199
AMY ROBSART	311

95024

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

HERNANI.

	Page
Hernani throws off his Disguise	44
Zanthe kneeling before Don Carlos	72
Don Leo, Hernani, and Zanthe	85

ANGELO.

Catarina finding the Block and Axe	276

HERNANI.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HERNANI.
DON CARLOS.
DON LEO DE SYLVA.
DON HENRIQUEZ.
THE DUKE OF BAVARIA.
THE DUKE OF GOTHA.
DON MATTHIAS.
DON RICARDO.
DE HARO.
DUKE ALCALA.
DUKE PARMA.
KING OF BOHEMIA.
FIRST CONSPIRATOR.
SECOND CONSPIRATOR.
A MOUNTAINEER.
BLACK DOMINO.
DONNA ZANTHE.
JOSEPHA.
ISADORE.

Conspirators of the Holy League, Germans and Spaniards, Mountaineers, Lords, Soldiers, Pages, Folk, etc.

SPAIN, 1519.

HERNANI.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *A bed chamber. Night. A lamp on a table; door of a closet,* L. 2 E.; *a small door,* R. C.; *a door* R. 2 E.; *door of entrance,* L. C.; *a table,* R. C., *and chairs.* JOSEPHA *discovered at embroidery. A knocking heard at a small door on the* R. C.; *she listens; knocking a second time.*

JOSEPHA.

He knocks. Yet sure 't is scarcely yet his time!
[*Knocking heard a third time.*
Yes, 't is his signal. And from thence it comes.
No loiterer he. [*Goes to the door,* R. C., *and opens it.*

DON CARLOS *enters, wrapped in a cloak, and a broad hat covering his eyes.*

JOSEPHA.

Good day, young cavalier. [*Looks closer.*]
Ah! 't is a stranger. Ho! within there! help!

DON CARLOS (*seizing her arm*).

Another word, old woman, is thy last,
Save at my pleasure. Thou art dumb; 't is well —
Then is there reason in thee! Answer me:
This chamber is the privacy, is 't not,
Of Donna Zanthe, — she that is affianced

To wed her kinsman, old Don Leo Gomez?
The veteran, that despite grey hairs, yet vaunts
A soul as fiery in love or war
As we of nimbler pulse and rounder limb!
Is 't so?

JOSEPHA.

It is. This is her chamber, signor.

DON CARLOS.

Good. And the fair betrothed yields, as I think,
To strange disloyal fancies: dreams o' nights,
While Grey-beard sleeps securely, of a chin
Furnished in daintier fashion, of moustachios
Sleek and ungrizzled, that encumber not
The lips of love, and above all, an eye,
Stood rival legions armed against his hopes,
Would look a fierce defiance to them all, —
How 's this, old dame?

JOSEPHA.

You bade me hold my peace.

DON CARLOS.

Save at my pleasure, that will have thee speak,
And quickly. For thy conscience and discretion,
This gripe acquits them both. Wilt answer me?

JOSEPHA.

I will.

DON CARLOS.

Your amorous dotard is abroad, no doubt?

JOSEPHA.

He is.

DON CARLOS.

The youth expected?

JOSEPHA.

Yes.

DON CARLOS.

And here the turtles are to meet and coo.

JOSEPHA.

So you spoil not their cooing.

DON CARLOS.

That may happen.
Conceal me.

JOSEPHA.

Lo, the door by which you entered
Is open, signor, and the city's wide.
Go and conceal yourself.

DON CARLOS.

Here, in this chamber,
Find me a hiding place.

JOSEPHA.

Find *you?* For what?
What seek ye with my mistress?

DON CARLOS.

I — oh! nothing.

JOSEPHA.

What then with me?

DON CARLOS.

Nay, truly, nothing either.

JOSEPHA.

Begone then.

DON CARLOS.

In good time. Wilt hide me?

JOSEPHA.

Never.

DON CARLOS.

I have some precious metals here may help me.
[*Draws from his girdle a dagger and a purse.*
Wilt please you choose between them, —
Steel or gold?

JOSEPHA.

You are the devil, then.

DON CARLOS.

To-night I am.

JOSEPHA.

I think so; and despite my sanctity,
I needs must hold a candle to thee.

DON CARLOS.

Wisely resolved.

JOSEPHA.

Give me thy gold. 'T is lusty, faith!
[*Takes it, then opens a closet,* L.
Now enter here.

DON CARLOS (*crosses to the closet*).

Here! Art thou mad, old lady?
What fiddle-case is this? I could not thrust
My cloak in it.

JOSEPHA.

You 'll find no other here,
Depend on 't; so, since hiding is your pleasure,
If 't is a fiddle-case, be you the fiddle.

You 'll not be first, that I can tell you, signor,
Nor like to make much music in our concert.

DON CARLOS (*entering*).

If I out come alive, it must be quickly.

JOSEPHA.

Hark! I hear
My mistress coming. Shut the door.

DON CARLOS.

Now, mark me:
Unless you 'd have the steel, as well as gold,
Be trusty. Not a word!

JOSEPHA.

I shall remember. [*Shuts him in.*]
Who can the savage be? What brings him here?
Shall I be bold and call for help? From whom?
All in the palace sleep except myself
And Donna Zanthe. Then I 'll keep my counsel.
The brave Hernani cannot tarry long.
And let him look to it. His gold may fail,
But for his steel, he 'll match with this gallant,
I 'll warrant him.

Enter DONNA ZANTHE R. 2 E.

ZANTHE.

Josepha!

JOSEPHA.

Madam.

ZANTHE.

I begin to fear
Some accident. Hernani should be here
Ere this. Have you not heard his signal?

JOSEPHA.

No, madam. Once I fancied I had heard it,
But found I was mistaken.

ZANTHE (*listening*).

Didst not hear
A footstep?

JOSEPHA.

No. At night one hears so plainly —
Dogs, cats, and other restless animals
That fidget strangely. Some such thing you heard.

ZANTHE.

No, no, his step approaches. To the door
Before he knocks. [JOSEPHA *crosses to* R. D., *opens it.*

[HERNANI *enters in a large cloak and hat, and beneath, the dress of a Mountaineer of Arragon, grey, with a cuirass of leather, wearing a sword, a poniard suspended from his left shoulder, and a horn in his girdle.*

HERNANI.

Donna Zanthe!
Do I again behold thee? hear my name
Uttered by thy sweet voice, whose music dwells
Forever on my fancy, lulling me
Even on my mountain couch with happy dreams?

ZANTHE.

Heavens!
Your cloak is drenched. Has it then rained so hard?

HERNANI.

I mark'd it not.

ZANTHE.

You must be cold.

HERNANI.

'T is nothing.

ZANTHE.

Nay, let me dry thy mantle.
Thou 'rt cold I 'm sure; let me have fire to cheer thee.

HERNANI (*his hand to his breast*).

Here,
Here resides a power
To mock the elements, or storm for storm
Encounter them, — a fire that sets at nought
The falling torrent or the wintry blast.
Feel this wild pulse. These water-drops refresh me.

ZANTHE (*taking his cloak*).

But this encumbers you — and this (*his sword*) — I 'll take them.

HERNANI.

Nay, not my good sword, unless for jealousy —
Of one more friend, constant and true as thou art;
A friend well proved and trusty. Your duke — your lord
(Your lord so named abroad by every voice) —
Where is he?

ZANTHE.

Speak not of him now. This hour
Belongs to us.

HERNANI.

This hour, — alas! it may be
This and no more, — a bright and starry hour
In one long night of darkness — desolation! [*crosses to* L.

ZANTHE.

Hernani!

HERNANI (*bitterly*).

Yet this hour I must enjoy,
Be proud to steal one hour of love from him
Who robs me of my life to come.

ZANTHE.

Nay, calm thee. Good Josepha, dry his mantle.
[*Exit* JOSEPHA *with mantle,* R. 2 E.

ZANTHE (*takes a seat* L. *of table and beckons* HERNANI).
Come, come and sit by me.

HERNANI.

The Duke is absent, then?

ZANTHE.

Nay, think not of him! [*Rising and coming down* C.

HERNANI.

Not think of him! You mock me. Hath he not
A burning love for thee? Have I not seen
His withered lips imprint on thine a kiss?

ZANTHE.

'T was a kinsman's kiss,
And such as fathers to their children give.

HERNANI.

A kiss thou art unschooled in, — such a kiss
'T would madden me to think thou could'st requite.
I cry you mercy. I offend, perhaps,
His blooming bride. You doubtless wed him freely;

ZANTHE.

I have shown pity for an inward grief
That long oppressed him, and he hath been to me
A kind protector and a loving kinsman;
But with my own good-will I ne'er will wed him.

HERNANI.

Not with thy own good-will? Dost think the lunatic
Will forge thy chains of iron?

ZANTHE.

The King, 't is said, will have it so.

HERNANI (*surprised and much excited*).

The King! the King!
A heavier, bitterer curse
Than all I yet have breathed, now light on him.
My noble father on the scaffold died,
Condemned by his! Sworn and relentless foes,
Full thirty years their strife endured. The grave
Has closed on both. But in their sons their hate,
Sacred inheritance, survives more fiercely.
My love for thee, that for a time had seemed
To soothe my stubborn rancour, arms it now
With sting more deadly. Carlos of Castile!
I 've hunted thee as famished wolves their prey;
Watched, traced thee like a bloodhound. In good time
Thou com'st athwart my path. Thou 'rt welcome
heartily. [*Crosses to* R.

ZANTHE.

You terrify me.

HERNANI.

Hear me. The man to whom foul tyranny
Would link thy youth, is a grandee, rich, powerful.

His youth is past, — long past. Thy heart's free throb
Of honest sympathy can ne'er be his.
What then? Thou 'lt be a duchess; move in pageants,
Bravely apparell'd as the Queen herself;
Thy sphere a court; thy home a palace! I
Am poor; in woods and wilds I dwell,
And live as lives the tiger. It may chance
I have my blazon of nobility,
Tho' a brave father's blood may somewhat rust it;
Rights and titles
In the black scaffold-cloth enveloped long,
Which this good sword may one day bring to light.
Meantime the beam that blesses all, the free
And common elements, are all my portion.
I cannot waste my heart in jealous fears:
This hour unites, or else forever parts us.
Decide, then. Wed thy duke — or follow me.

ZANTHE.

I 'll follow thee.

HERNANI.

Thou wilt? Rash maid! Thou 'lt share a lot like mine!
For noble as I am by birth, by nature
The friend of man, the foe alone of tyrants,
I am proclaimed an outlaw. Throughout Spain
The death-shout hath pursued me, till secure
Amid old Catalonia's wilderness
Of savage rocks, I stood at bay
And won her lusty mountaineers in troops
To stand by me. This horn now musters them,
Three thousand strong! You tremble! Such is he
Thou lov'st. Think well on 't! Caves and dark ravines
Our only shelter; couched on the bare earth;
Fed by the changeful fortune of the chase,
Or hostile plunder; every sound a larum

To lynx-eyed caution, yielding not an hour
Of tranquil rest — oh! think, day after day,
To wander with me thus; it may be, follow me
Where I my father follow, — to the scaffold.

ZANTHE.

I 'll follow thee!

HERNANI.

The Duke will have thee pillowed
On softest down! The Duke lives proud in favour,
His name untarnished, his escutcheon bright —

ZANTHE (*eagerly*).

I 'll follow *thee*. To-morrow will we fly.
I owe my life to thee. I am thine.
The spell that won thee
Three thousand followers hath won me too.
With thee I 'll wander, or with thee abide.
To see thee, hear thee, know and share thy fortunes,
Is all I ask. Oh! we will never part.
When thy last footstep hath escaped my ear
My heart no longer seems to beat — entombed
And dead within my bosom; dead to all things —
Till, heard afar, the sweet returning music
Dissolves the trance and brings me life again.

HERNANI.

Was I reserved for this! Unlooked-for-hour!
Such love is only woman's; it hath changed
My tyrant heart, abashed by selfish will,
And now I shudder at my rash demand,
For yet you know not half the history —

[*Here* DON CARLOS *breaks from the closet*, L., *with a violent crash.* ZANTHE *shrieks and clings to* HERNANI.

DON CARLOS.

Your history 's too long. You that are fond
Of air should have more mercy for a man,
Stifled as I have been.

HERNANI.

Who is this man ?

ZANTHE.

I know not! Sure, some robber.

DON CARLOS.

Softly, Donna.
My crippled limbs have had such lame amends
In satisfaction of my eyes or ears
That who your favoured visitor may be
'T were rash to guess at; yet I scarcely think
Our fellowship will much disgrace him.

ZANTHE.

Leave us.

HERNANI (*crosses to* C.).

What seek you here ?

DON CARLOS.

First let me know, rough sir,
Your proud authority to question me.
What if I seek an hour or two's diversion ?

HERNANI.

Unless your will bequeath it to your heir,
Your raillery may be brief.

DON CARLOS.

Nay, every man
His turn. I have, with all due courtesy,
Allowed you yours, and claim requital, signor.
That you should love this lady's bright black eyes,

I marvel not; for by St. Dominick
I love them too, and could not choose but know
The youth who found o' nights such prompt admittance
While I stood patient sentinel below.

HERNANI.

I 'd have your curiosity provoke
No further knowledge of him. Hence!

DON CARLOS.

Your pardon.
Of you I know enough; but for the lady [*crosses to* C.],
She is a mine so rich in sweet instruction
As may excuse my tarrying to explore.
A boon I ask, for her sake and for yours.
The steed who walks an undisputed course
Wins an inglorious race. I may afford you
A trophy for your victory, and exercise
The lady's judgment with a choice at least.

ZANTHE.

I know you not. How got you here admittance?

DON CARLOS.

I was mistaken for a happier man,
But not so well disposed of.

HERNANI.

Insolent!

DON CARLOS.

If thus you swell, keep clear of yonder closet;
You would explode as quickly there —

HERNANI.

As now
My sword would quit its scabbard. [*Draws.*

DON CARLOS (*crossing* R., *draws also*).

Give it air;
We 'll find it exercise.

ZANTHE.

Hernani! hold!
For my sake! [*Throws herself between them.*

HERNANI (*puts her across to his* L.).

'T is an ill-placed quarrel, sir;
An honest foe in fitter time will end it.
Your name!

DON CARLOS.

In fair exchange — yours?

HERNANI.

'T is a secret, —
Marr'd in its purpose by a rash disclosure,
Reserved for one into whose ear I 'll whisper it,
When by a conqueror's knee transfixed I hold him
And plunge my dagger in his heart.

DON CARLOS.

Brave talking!
Your vengeance in contingency is deadly,
Your present wisely sacrificed.

HERNANI.

No more! Defend yourself!

[*They draw.* ZANTHE *in despair. Loud knocking heard at the* D. L. C.

ZANTHE.

We are surprised! Oh, heavens!

[*The combatants pause.* JOSEPHA *enters at the door* R. 2 E. *in great alarm.*

HERNANI.

Who knocks so loud?

JOSEPHA.

Oh, madam! Fatal chance!
It is the Duke returned.

ZANTHE.

The Duke! I'm lost!

HERNANI.

This way, we'll fly. [*Crosses to* R. C.].

JOSEPHA.

'T is guarded from without.

DON LEO (*without* L. C.).

Admit me, Zanthe.

HERNANI (*to* JOSEPHA, *who is going to the door*).

Woman, stay!

JOSEPHA.

Good saints defend us! we are all undone.

HERNANI (*to* DON CARLOS).

We must conceal ourselves.

DON CARLOS.

Where? [HERNANI *points to closet*, L.
You'll excuse me.
What! two such panting spirits! We should shake
The very walls. You, signor, where you will;
I care not to encounter duke or devil,
And here I stand.

HERNANI.

This outrage shall o'ertake you.

DON CARLOS (*to* JOSEPHA).

Open the door.

HERNANI.

Are you then mad?

DON CARLOS (*more imperatively*).

Open the door!

JOSEPHA.

I will. [*Runs trembling to the door.*

ZANTHE.

Mercy!

[*The door,* L. C., *is opened, and enter* DON LEO DE SYLVA, *followed by Attendants with lights; he is dressed in black, and wears the Order of the Golden Fleece.*

DON LEO.

So, my fair cousin, you 've your midnight audience,
To which I scarce am welcome! Lights here, ho!
This is a scene worthy of witnesses.
Why what wild times, young cavaliers, are these?
Is this that same Castile that boasted once
Her Cid, her brave Bernardo, — giant hearts
Whose pride it was to bear about the world
A shield for the oppress'd, reverence for age,
And to unspotted beauty bend the knee
Of chivalrous devotion!
What seek you here; is he
Who fought at Zamora beneath defiance,
And, for a few grey hairs, to be cajoled
By ribald practices like these?

HERNANI.

Great Duke —

DON LEO.

Be silent. Have ye not your games and pastimes,
Your hunting and your falconry, your masques,
Your revels and carousals, that ye now
Will madly sport —

HERNANI.

Good signor, let me say —

DON LEO.

Say nothing; you are born but to obey me.

HERNANI.

Your tone! —

DON LEO.

My tone is courteous — does ye honour.
Boys — triflers — if ye know not who I am,
Follow me! What! the honour of my house,
The honour of my chosen wife, — a maid
Pure as the mountain snow which summer suns
Irradiate and melt not, in my charge,
And such as you invade it! Dauntless felons!
Are these the treasures you would rob me of?
Me! a De Sylva! Blood of my ancestors!
Am I become a byeword?

ZANTHE.

My lord —

DON LEO (*to his Attendants*).

My squires, to arm me! haste,
My hatchet and Toledo rapier! Follow me!
Follow me, both!

DON CARLOS (*checking him*).

Be patient, Duke; your prowess
Or ours is not the question now. My business
Concerns the death of Maximilian,
Late Emperor of Germany.

DON LEO.

D' ye mock me?

DON CARLOS.

No, Duke.

[*Throws off his mantle, and exposes his face by raising his hat.*

DON LEO.

The King! [*Kneels.*

ZANTHE.

The King!

HERNANI (*strongly excited*).

The King of Spain!

DON CARLOS (*to* DON LEO).

Your sovereign and your friend. How now? Don Leo,
Is your blood still so hot? This great event
Hath scarcely reached me, and at once I come,
In all expedient haste and privacy,
To you, my well-beloved and trusty minister,
For counsel on 't. A simple case, methinks,
To stir so loud a clamour.

DON LEO.

Sire, I crave
Your pardon; but so long denied admittance —

DON CARLOS.

It was your privacy I sought; and hearing
A troop of lacqueys at your heels —

DON LEO.

'T is true.

DON CARLOS.

Old friend, I thought to make you governor
Of Andalusia; but whom, I pray,
Must I appoint *your* governor?

DON LEO.

In sooth
'T is time these storms were hushed.

DON CARLOS.

Enough; and since
This thunder-cloud is passed, we 'll to our purpose.
The Emperor, my ancestor, 't is certain,
Is dead.

DON LEO.

On whom is 't thought
Will fall the election to his envied throne?

DON CARLOS.

They name, as on the list of candidates,
A certain Duke of Saxony, and Francis —

DON LEO.

Your Highness means —

DON CARLOS.

Francis the First of France.

DON LEO.

A promising aspirant! Where, my liege,
Hold the electors their assembly?

DON CARLOS.

Faith,
I 'm ill informed; Aix-la-Chapelle, or Spires,
Or Frankfort, possibly.

DON LEO.

And has your Highness
(Whom Heaven still prosper) never yet himself
Thought of the empire?

DON CARLOS.

Constantly.

DON LEO.

My liege,
'T is yours by right.

DON CARLOS.

I know it.

DON LEO.

Every right, —
Your father was Archduke of Austria,
And he who quits the purple for a shroud
Your ancestor direct.

DON CARLOS.

With all despatch
I start for Flanders; and on my return,
De Sylva, see that you salute me Emperor.

DON LEO.

'T is well.
Yet, ere you go, let me remind you, sire,
You leave a hydra-headed foe behind
'T were better you disposed of, — the bold route
Of lawless rebels that so long have scourged
Our Arragon, and in their growing strength
Threaten to beard us in our very streets.

DON CARLOS.

The Duke of Arcos has command and power
To sweep them off —

DON LEO.

Brief quittance, sire. Their captain
Heeds little of your sweeping projects.

DON CARLOS.

Psha! In Galicia now he lurks, and soon
Must yield him to his fetters.

DON LEO.

I 've assurance
He hovers round the city.

DON CARLOS.

You 're deceived.
What matters where! To-night we lodge with you.

DON LEO (*with warmth and respect*).

A royal welcome. Ho!
The King 's our guest.
Do him all honour.

[*Fresh Attendants appear with lights; the* DUKE *motions them into ranks towards the* R. 2 E. DONNA ZANTHE *moves cautiously towards* HERNANI; *the* KING *observes them.*

ZANTHE (*to* HERNANI).

To-morrow, at the midnight hour, remember
You fail me not.

HERNANI (*comes down,* L.).

To-morrow.

DON CARLOS (*turning to* HERNANI).

I have done you, sir, the honour
To measure swords with you; and though I fear
That honour most unworthily conferred,
To-night I 'll not betray you. Seek your safety;
I 'll cover your retreat.

DON LEO (*advancing, observing* HERNANI).

Have I neglected —

DON CARLOS.

One of my suite, — a confidential follower;
I 've sent him on a charge. Lead on.

[*Exeunt* DON CARLOS, DONNA ZANTHE, DON LEO, *and Attendants,* DON LEO *with a flambeau before the* KING, R. 2 E. HERNANI *remains.*

HERNANI.

One of thy suite! thy follower! Aye, while life
Or motion in these limbs are left, by day,
By night, and step by step, I 'll dog thee.
No courtier of thy train, whose slavish eye
Still strains to guess at each caprice in thine,
No parasite who waits thine issuing breath
To do it homage, till the fulsome poison
Recoil upon his nature, shall attend thee
With half so keen observance. Thy follower!
Aye, closely as thy shadow, till thyself,
Proud King, art but a shadow in my gripe,
And, spurning thee, I trample on a clod. [*Exit* R. 2 E.

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The outside of the Palace of De Sylva; a window with a balcony,* L. 2 E.; *beneath, a small door; houses, and diverging streets; night; lights are seen at various windows of the palace, and a few different houses.*

JOSEPHA *enters* L. *door.*

JOSEPHA.

There, she sits still, and takes no heed of me; these strange events have well-nigh turned her head. Poor lamb! Three lovers, and such lovers too, are quite enough to turn any head that stands on female shoulders.

Enter DONNA ZANTHE, L.

ZANTHE.

Josepha! is the King gone?

JOSEPHA.

Gone, child! why, did n't you see him go?

ZANTHE.

True, true, I did, but — I know not why —
I thought he might be returned.

JOSEPHA.

Nay, sweet, you gave him but small encouragement to return; and the poor dear Duke did so glory to see thee so cold and coy, I vow it made one's heart ache to see the good old soul so delude himself. Well, well! at his years he ought to know better, that 's a sure thing.

ZANTHE.

Josepha! spare me. It goes hard enough with me to think of him.

JOSEPHA.

Aye, marry, and 't will go harder with him when he knows the truth, as I suppose he must, soon; eh, lambkin? How is it to end, sweet? What is thy purpose?

ZANTHE (*her manner bewildered*).

I have none. Fate must guide me. My brain shuts out all purpose, all reflection.

JOSEPHA.

And the visits of the young cavalier —

ZANTHE.

Are at an end. With my consent he enters here no more.

JOSEPHA.

Thou 'lt wed Don Leo, then?

ZANTHE.

I said not so.

JOSEPHA.

Ah! would thou hadst never said so. 'T is that he relies upon, — that thou art plighted with thy consent.

ZANTHE.

Yet, sure he does me wrong. 'T was two years since.
In all things else, 't is said, nor law nor justice
Will have the child's rash contract bind the woman.
I pledged to him the love a husband claims
Ere such a love I knew, and knowing it,
To him I feel it ne'er can be assigned. [*Crosses to* L.

JOSEPHA.

Ah! 't is plain, sweet, how it was with you. His first unfaithful wife had made him wretched for many a long year. To you he was ever kind; you pitied his sadness, loved him with all a young heart's gratitude, and the old fox made the most of it.

ZANTHE.

Revile him not, nor speak thus lightly of him.

JOSEPHA.

No, truly, he is not for light treatment! The phantom Honour is the idol of his worship. Did n't he make a prisoner of the late Duchess for the brief remainder of her days? Ah, well-a-day! Don Leo is an awful man.

ZANTHE.

An awful man he is; and, kind Josepha,
It is not well, so far to have allured thee
From thy allegiance to him. Shame upon me!
But I 'll be wiser. Rest to-night in safety;
The evening wanes. I would retire alone,
And bring no further sin upon thee.

JOSEPHA (*in kind reproach*).

Dost thou fear me?

ZANTHE.

No, but I love thee; and if thou lovest me,
Go to thy chamber, and come not to mine. [*Exit* L. *door.*

JOSEPHA.

Alas, poor thing! I know not what is in thy head, but there is little comfort at thy heart, I fear. A woeful day it may prove for thee, when this gallant mountaineer

stopped thy runaway courser on the verge of a precipice, to lure thee to a brink more dangerous. The stern Don Leo cares little for old Josepha's loyalty; but if thine fail him, woe to us all! [*Exit* L. *door.*

Enter DON CARLOS, DON HENRIQUEZ, DON MATTHIAS, *and* DON RICARDO *in cloaks,* R. U. E.

DON CARLOS.

That is her chamber, friends. 'T was there Don Carlos,
Whose mind must needs range empires, found his person
Suddenly circumscribed to three feet square.
That is her window; and beneath, the door
Sacred to love. Can she have changed her purpose?
The hour is nigh. Yet lights are everywhere,
Save there where I would have them.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

I ponder still, my liege, on your strange rival,
Who, as you well conjecture, may be captain
Of these marauding rebels.

DON MATTHIAS.

Heard you his name, my liege?

DON CARLOS.

I nothing heard
Distinctly; 't was Romani, or Fernani, —
Some name with such an ending.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

'T was Hernani.

DON CARLOS.

It was so.

DON MATTHIAS.

Then 't was he.

DON RICARDO.

Their chief, Hernani.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

And could your Highness let him thus escape?

DON CARLOS (*turning on him with a grave look*).

D' ye question me, my lord?

[*They withdraw in deference and respect.*

You 'd set a price
Upon his head, perhaps? Yet it becomes
His shoulders. Nor can we condemn his taste.
Ambitious as it is, so we can cheat him
Of his fair mistress, to his head he 's welcome.
Now, friends, be firm, resolute. Her signal
I know. The lovers both must be secured.
We 'll share the task, — that is, you 'll understand,
The lady shall be mine, and yours the bandit.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

You 've chosen well, my liege.

DON CARLOS.

Bar his approach, at least. Away! my task
I 'll answer for.

DON MATTHIAS.

Your Highness will confess 't is not hardest.

[*Exeunt* RICARDO, MATTHIAS, *and* HENRIQUEZ, R. U. E.

DON CARLOS.

Now for her signal.

[*Claps his hands thrice deliberately, and* DONNA ZANTHE *opens the casement and appears at the balcony.*

ZANTHE.

Is it you, Hernani?

DON CARLOS.

I dare not answer her. [*Repeats the signal.*

ZANTHE.

I come! I come!
[*Closes the casement, and the lights disappear.*

DON CARLOS.

With three such sentinels we are secure
Of elbow-room to woo her royally.

ZANTHE *enters from the little door beneath,* L.

ZANTHE.

Hernani!
[*Going to* R., *he advances briskly towards her,* L.; *she lets fall the light.*
Heavens! 't is not his step; I 'm sure on 't.
[*Endeavours to retreat; he catches her in his arms.*

DON CARLOS.

My life!

ZANTHE.

'T is not his voice! I 'm lost!

DON CARLOS.

Fear nothing.
It is a voice will pledge to thee a heart
The truest, the tenderest, — a voice of power
To crown thy every wish; nay, to crown thee!

ZANTHE.

The King!

DON CARLOS.

And would'st thou spurn his fond embrace?
He is thy slave. A kingdom, and a life
Of love he offers thee for thine.

ZANTHE (*struggling*).

Help! help!

DON CARLOS.

'Gainst whom? You deal not with a robber now,
But with a king, — the foe and scourge of robbers.

ZANTHE.

'T is false! Thou art the robber, that would seek
By lawless force what honour hath denied thee!
Thou stain'st my cheek with shame, but 't is for thee, —
For thee and thy foul purpose. Were it honest,
Would'st thou at midnight snare a helpless woman?
And darest thou talk of robbers, — thou! Hernani
Is noble, generous; and I tell thee, King,
Were each man station'd where his heart should place him,
The sceptre would be his, the dagger thine.
Was not my father noble?

DON CARLOS.

I will make
Thee greater. Thou shalt be a queen —
An empress.

ZANTHE.

'T were treason! I have pledged, as woman will,
My life and soul in bond irrevocable
By human power tho' tongue had never shaped it;
And rather would I share Hernani's fortune
Ev'n at its bleakest, — cold abandonment,
War, exile, beggary, and worst of all,
The scourge, great King, of thine immaculate justice, —
Than be enthroned an empress with an emperor.

DON CARLOS.

You hate me, then?

ZANTHE.

I love you not. [*Crosses to* L.

DON CARLOS (*with increased violence*).

No matter!

ZANTHE.

Oh, heavens! my liege, behold me then thy suppliant.
Be gracious, merciful. What! when around thee
Beauty in thronging constellation shines,
Courting thy love, and eager to requite it?
And what has he, — the branded, the proscribed?
Canst thou not cull thy joys
Throughout thy rich Castile and Arragon?
And would'st thou, sovereign lord
Of this wide world of treasures, rob an outcast
Of one poor heart, who has but that on earth?

DON CARLOS (*still dragging her*).

Thy words are breath to fire! Hence, hence, *my* world
For thee and for thy love; claim what thou wilt.

ZANTHE.

I ask but one thing.

DON CARLOS.

Speak.

ZANTHE (*snatching a dagger from his belt*).

I have it.
Now. [*The* KING *falls back.*
Advance one step —

DON CARLOS.

I' faith, I marvel not
You love a rebel. Yet 't were sin to fear thee.
[*Inclining to her.*

ZANTHE.

Forbear! or on my soul, you lightly hold
Your life and mine. Hernani! ho! Hernani!

DON CARLOS.

Your cries are vain. I have at hand to aid me
Three of my followers.

HERNANI (*suddenly appearing from* R. U. E.).

One you have forgotten.

[*The* KING *turns suddenly round.* HERNANI *stands motionless before him, enveloped in his cloak, his hat slightly raised.* DONNA ZANTHE, *with an exclamation of joy, rushes and clings to him.*

Heaven knows, great sir,
I could have wished our place of meeting now
Had been at fitter distance from the last.

ZANTHE (R.).

Nay, let us fly from him.

HERNANI (*calmly*).

There is no haste.

DON CARLOS.

Ho, there, cravens!

HERNANI.

Your friends are in the power of mine.
Our quarrel here must end, and 'twixt us two.
What! you have laid a hand of violence
Upon a noble lady! King of Spain,
'T was a rash act, and not a valiant one.

DON CARLOS.

Peace, thou fantastic ruffian! Dost flatter thee
We meet as yesternight?

HERNANI.

And if we meet not as equals,
Dost flatter thee pre-eminence is thine?
Know'st thou the throng of swelling thoughts that now
Uplift me o'er the mighty space between us?
Thou art a king! and what is he whose grasp
[*Seizing the* KING'S *arm.*
Now mocks thy majesty. Hear then, and know me.
Thy father was the murderer of mine —
I hate thee! Thou hast despoiled and branded me —
I hate thee! Thou would'st rob me of *her* love,
For whose sake I could have forgotten thee —
I hate thee! From my heart's deep core I hate thee!

DON CARLOS.

Madman!

HERNANI.

In an unlook'd-for hour you cross'd us.
To-night I sought her, and again I found *you;*
But in thy treacherous snare thyself entangled,
Thou art beleaguer'd, and must do me right.
Stand to thy guard! [*The* KING *stirs not.*] Do I defy a coward?

DON CARLOS.

One way alone I 'll do thee right. I scorn thee!

HERNANI.

Scorn me! Is it because
Placed, darkling, in my power, I have forgone
A bravo's justice for a soldier's, thou
Believest my vengeance air-blown as a woman's?
I 'll not be baffled. Draw —

DON CARLOS.

Against thee? Never!
I am king. I will not fight with thee.

HERNANI.

Do you forget —

DON CARLOS.

Last night we both were maskers;
To-day discloses us for what we are.
Thou art my rebel subject; I am thy king.

HERNANI.

You rave; yet urge me not.

DON CARLOS.

I spurn thy challenge.
Whistle thy gang. Let all your daggers strike!
The combat I disdain.

HERNANI.

Of this I dreamed not.

DON CARLOS.

What! dreamed you then a king could be entrapp'd
To play thy game, and aid thy broad imposture,
Gild o'er thy crimes, and, stain'd with blood and plunder,
Assist thee with a garish cloak of chivalry
To dazzle a weak woman? No; that cloak
I strip, and leave thee in thy naked infamy.
Stick to thy trade. Give place, or, bravo, stab me!

HERNANI (*inwardly struggling*).

Hell!

ZANTHE (*stopping him*).

My Hernani! Wilt thou kill the King?
That King so long the friend of the De Sylvas!
For thine honour
(Which if his words wrong, let not thine own deeds),
Fly! fly! and heed him not.

HERNANI (*to the* KING, *after a struggle and convulsive movement of his sword*).

You are free.
The time may come when we may meet as equals,
Each at the head of armies. [*The* KING *smiles.*] Aye, an army.
My gathering bands may form as well as thine;
For what (save numbers only) hath conferr'd
That prouder name on many a robber band
Whose deeds make us illustrious crusaders.
And kings, to spoil and trample on the weak,
By fifty thousands lead their armies forth,
Who hang up modest fifty as banditti.
Pass, but be sure you will not be forgotten.

DON CARLOS (*crosses* R.).

Gramercy! Sir, nor you; and your forbearance,
I warn you still, is at your utmost peril.
I hold thee for a traitor and a rebel,
If nothing worse. My refuge is at hand,
With power unlimited, to crush at once
Thy boast and thee. Yet with this notice, signor,
As tranquilly I turn my back on thee
As if so fierce a foe had never been. [*Exit* R.

HERNANI.

What trial more than this can nature prove?
Do I not love thee now?

ZANTHE.

Too well; and yet
The King, whate'er his threats, is ever generous.

HERNANI.

The King hath rarely said the thing he means not,
Nor lingers in the act. Ere this the cry

Is up. The lion is abroad; and soon,
Martial and civil, grooms, lacqueys, magistrates,
And men at arms, will run an eager race
To win the price of this devoted head.

ZANTHE.

Oh, Heaven defend us! Let us fly at once.

HERNANI.

Nay, not together; let my hastening doom
Restore thee to thy safety. Here we part.

ZANTHE.

Is this to stab me with reproach?

HERNANI.

Reproach?
Oh! though the only light that yet hath cheer'd,
How blessedly! my dark and wintry fortune,—
Sweet comforter! most pure and beautiful,
That thro' their burning channels still can draw
These tears, — not an eternity of torture
Should wring from me one bitter thought of thee,
Or any but of love, of boundless love.

ZANTHE.

Alas!

HERNANI.

But when assured, and in my sight the scaffold
Stands the black boundary of hope and fortune,
Thy path be far from mine.

ZANTHE.

Then thou art false,—
To me more cruel than thy foes to thee.
I cannot leave thee.

HERNANI.

Nay, this is not well.
The storm that rives the mountain pine may spare
The flower that courts its shelter. Shall I drag
Thee down a gulf that yawns before me, blot
Thy maiden fame with foul disgrace? Away!
Preserve thy life and honour. Angels guard thee!

ZANTHE.

For what — if I abandon thee? Plead not
Against my right; no, I will cling to thee
Till the last pulse hath fluttered at thy heart,
And wrap me in thy winding sheet.

HERNANI (*breaking from her to* R.).

Return!

ZANTHE.

Am I cast from thee? Here then will I perish.
[*Falls on the ground.*

HERNANI (*alarmed at her situation*).

So desperate, noble Zanthe!
Since thou wilt have it so, we will not part.
Hallowed and heaven-protected, we will not fear.
Steals not now
Peace to thy bosom? Peerless Donna Zanthe,
We still are blessed! Look brightly thro' thy tears.

ZANTHE.

I do; I *am* blest. [*The bells of the city are heard ringing an alarm.*] Ha! the tocsin!

HERNANI.

No, it is our nuptial peal.
[*The clamour increases. Shouts are heard,* R.; *a glare of torches through the streets.*

ZANTHE.

Rise, rise, and fly! The city 's roused! The glare
Approaches!

HERNANI.

'T is to light us to our bridal.

ZANTHE.

To light thee to thy tomb.

HERNANI.

My lovely bride!
Thus will we give them welcome.
[*Clasps her with his left arm.*

A MOUNTAINEER *enters, with drawn sword,* R.

MOUNTAINEER.

We are surprised.
The Sbirri, the Alcaldi and their followers
Beset us closely.

ZANTHE.

And I have delayed thee!

HERNANI.

Rally as you may. I follow.
[*Cries without,* R.] This way! upon them. [*Shouts,* R.

HERNANI (*to* ZANTHE).

Since it must be so,
Farewell!

ZANTHE.

You rush upon destruction. Here
With me you still may shelter. [*Points to door,* L.

HERNANI.

And desert my gallant friends? [*Going,* R.

ZANTHE (*calling*).

Hernani! Thou wilt strive to save thee!

HERNANI (*returning*).

Aye, by this holy pledge I now first dare
To print upon thy cheek. Farewell. [*Kisses her cheek.*
[*Shouts and clash of swords continued till end of act.*

ZANTHE.

Farewell!

[HERNANI *rushes out,* R. *She totters, exhausted, towards the portico.* JOSEPHA *enters from the door under the balcony,* L. ZANTHE *falls against a pillar of the portico.* JOSEPHA *hastens to her assistance, and the curtain falls quickly.*

ACT III.

SCENE. — *Interior of the Castle of De Sylva, in the mountains of Arragon. A gallery of family portraits, which are surrounded with ducal coronets, and gilt escutcheons. A lofty gothic door in the flat. Between each portrait a panoply of the armour of different ages.* DONNA ZANTHE, *in white, standing before a table,* R. C. DON LEO *in a splendid dress, and seated in a chair of state.*

DON LEO.

The rich atonement for repining years
At length arrives. Most dear and gentle cousin,
Long my sole comfort, now my better self,
To-day will give thee rank above all dames
That bear De Sylva's name.
Where are thy smiles? I fear
Thou hast not yet forgiven the wrong I did thee,
That I should bring a blush upon that cheek
With base suspicion; thou art pale and sad!
Much it hath grieved me, more perchance than thee;
Yet, certes, they were there; two gallant forms
Of men, at midnight, in thy chamber, Zanthe,
Was not a sight to mend an old man's rest
Who was to call thee wife.

ZANTHE.

It is forgotten;
Let me entreat you speak of it no more.

DON LEO.

It will no more be questioned, — trust me, never.
I must have charity for some weak thoughts
My sixty years have brought me. Time, I fear,

Hath scored them with unsparing hand. Yet do I love thee
As light and shallow youth can never love.
As yet there are no wrinkles at my heart;
And ever gladdened with thy grace and beauty
It will forever beat with young delight.

ZANTHE.

Alas!

DON LEO.

Or when it faintlier throbs, 't is thy
Fond care will soothe it till it throb no more.

ZANTHE.

My lord, that care perhaps may not be mine.

DON LEO.

Not thine!

ZANTHE.

The young oft rush into the tomb,
Leaving the old still lingering on its verge,
To close it o'er them.

DON LEO.

Fie on these sad thoughts!
Dost thou forget thou art a blooming bride?
Do maidens talk of tombs, while holy men
Prepare for them the altar? We detain them.
Wilt not attire thee?

ZANTHE.

There is time enough.

DON LEO.

Not so.

ISADORE, *a page, enters at* C. *doors.*

What says our Isadore?

ISADORE.

A lowly stranger, as I think a pilgrim,
Entreats asylum in the castle.

DON LEO.

Grant it.
He comes in happy time. Whoe'er he be,
For rest or safety, weary or in peril,
Seek he our shelter, it shall be to him
Refuge assured. So tell him, and so pledge
Our hospitality. Stay! what news
Of our marauding rebels?

ISADORE.

They are routed.
Some taken, many killed. Their bold Hernani,
The lion of the hills, beset on all sides,
Has no escape.

ZANTHE (R. *aside*).

I sink.

DON LEO.

How know you this?

ISADORE.

From some employed to hunt them down. The King
Himself pursues their chief. A thousand crowns
Are offered for his head; but 't is the rumour
He is among the slain.

ZANTHE (*aside*).

And I still live!
Hernani!

DON LEO.

So, that were the better chance,
Haply for him, and, doubtless, for his hunters.
(*To* ZANTHE) Still tarrying? Josepha waits. I pr'ythee
let her
Adorn thee fitly.

ZANTHE (*aside*).

Fitly, were in weeds, —
Weeds for my widowed heart. [*Exit* ZANTHE R.

ISADORE.

Would my lord ask —

DON LEO.

No more; admit the stranger, crave his pardon
For thy delay. And, Isadore, that done,
Convey the casket destined for thy mistress.
[*Exit* ISADORE, C.
I 'll have her decked like a Madonna; thus,
With that dark eye so ample, soft, and saintly,
Half veiled beneath its deep and downcast lid,
Our pilgrim may kneel down and do her homage.
His coming 'bodes us good; it pleases me.
The stranger ever at my gate is welcome, —
To-day most warmly.

[HERNANI *appears at the great entrance,* C., *disguised as a pilgrim.*

HERNANI.

To my noble lord
All peace and happiness.

DON LEO.

As much to you.
Free cheer, true welcome, and, if such your need,
Inviolate asylum here are yours.
You are —

HERNANI.

A pilgrim.

DON LEO.

From Armillas?

HERNANI.

No.
That way was strife and bloodshed, and I shunn'd it.

DON LEO.

Whither speed you then?

HERNANI.

To Saragossa.

DON LEO.

With holy vows to thy protecting saint,
No doubt; or to our Lady del Pilar.

HERNANI.

With such intent, and to our Lady's shrine.

DON LEO.

If any wrong oppress thee, done or suffered,
Within these walls forget it, while they grin
With jubilee, and from all outward harm
Protect you as they shall. I may anon
Enquire your name and fortunes, which concern me
Only to serve you as I may. You are
My guest, what else I care not.
My bride! [*Crosses* R. HERNANI *is startled.*

[DONNA ZANTHE *enters in her bridal attire,* R., *Attendants, etc. Two Females bearing a velvet cushion, on which is placed a casket of polished steel, richly carved, which they place on a table. It contains the coronet of a duchess, necklace, bracelets, and a set of diamonds.*

DON LEO.

Behold *our* lady of the castle.
Whate'er of our devotions earth may claim,
Here, pilgrim, may be well bestowed.
Fair saint! [*Taking her hand.*

Approach. What 's here? A naked hand?
Where are thy rings — thy gems — thy coronet?

HERNANI (*in desperation throws off his disguise*).

Who 's for a thousand crowns? Here stands Hernani.

ZANTHE (*aside*).

Alive!

HERNANI.

Come all, behold the man so famed,
The head so prized!
Duke, you would know my name, — it is Hernani.
Is 't not a brave one? Introduce your guest
At court; he 'll serve you better there than all
Your scars —

ZANTHE.

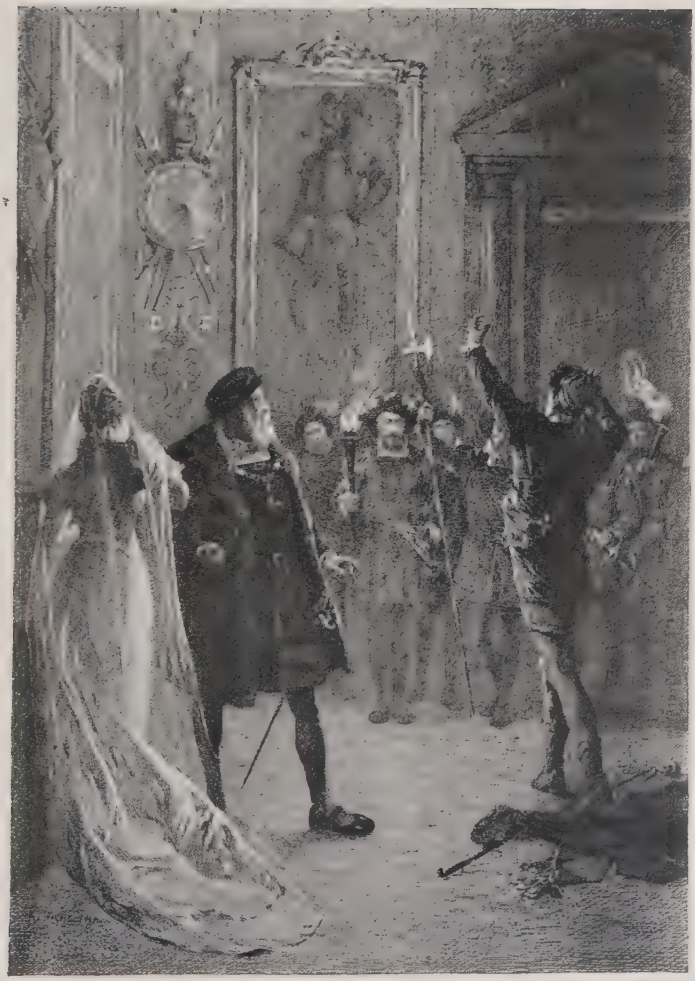
He 's lost!
Regard him not. He raves.
[*Crosses to* L., *and aside to him.*
Dear Hernani!

HERNANI.

Ah!
Some one of this good company recalls
And names me. Yes, I am Hernani. Since
There 's marriage here, I am for wedding, too.
My bride elect, the Moor's dark angel, Death!
She 's cold but constant, Duke.

DON LEO (*in a firm tone*).

I understand you not, but yet believe
There is no cause for desperation here.
The man who aims at thy head risks his own.
My guest, and in the name of Heaven received
Beneath my roof, Hernani, though you be,
These walls are compromised unharmed to hold you;



HERNANI THROWS OFF HIS DISGUISE.

And till my head surmount a breathless trunk,
For every hair of thine I 'll warrant it. [*To* ZANTHE.
My best beloved, retire awhile. [*To Suite.*] All follow me,
To arm my vassals and secure my gates.

[*Exit* DUKE *and Attendants,* C. DONNA ZANTHE *seems to follow her waiting-women, who go off,* R., *then stops and turns.* HERNANI *gazes on her steadfastly, but with strong emotion.*

HERNANI.

I give you joy, fair Duchess. On my life
Thou 'rt furnished splendidly. A casket too.
[*Taking it from the table.*
Gems in reserve, most brilliant and complete;
Diamonds and pearls! Rings, chains, and coronet!
No bauble left to sigh for. Precious store,
And well bestowed on love so pure, so lofty. [*Crosses* R.

ZANTHE (*taking a dagger from the casket*).

You have not searched it through.

HERNANI (*starting, then throwing himself at her feet*).

Forgive me!

ZANTHE.

This
I snatched from Carlos, when he would have had me
Partake his throne, which I refused for one
Who thus requites me!

HERNANI.

Strike it to his heart!
From thy hand merited, from thy hand welcome.

ZANTHE.

That hand can only raise thee from thy penitence.
The worst of wrongs, from thee, my heart can pardon, —

Much more the wild and frantic thoughts that drive thee,
For my sake, to despair.

HERNANI.

Oh! ever merciful,
Devoted, measureless in love and truth!
'T is time this untamed savage should resign thee
To that benign and gentle peace he found
The native inmate of thy bosom.

ZANTHE.

No. For thy woes it bleeds,
But not thy cruelty. I should have died —

HERNANI.

For me!

ZANTHE.

For whom, if not for thee? [*In a flood of tears.*

HERNANI.

Still tears,
And I the cause! and none will punish me, —
Not e'en my much abused and noble host.
I cannot shun, yet wherefore do I haunt thee?
I know not how to love, yet love to madness.
My friends are dead, or in their dungeons. I
Am left to be indeed a scourge — a ruffian!

ZANTHE (*with ardent abandonment*).

No, thou art good and generous, and with all
My heart I love thee. [*Falls on his neck.*

HERNANI.

Carlos, strike! for earth
Can yield no more.

[*They are linked in each other's arms, absorbed in looks of love and tenderness.*

Enter DON LEO, C.; *he stands amazed and motionless.*

DON LEO.

And this is then the world
I live in! this is now the recompense
Of hospitality! and this the man
Who, in the name of Christian brotherhood,
Demands our shelter! Thou besotted host,
Unbar thy gates, and let thy heart be opened
To give the stranger welcome in his need;
Arouse thy pride, and string thy sinews up
To champion him, at sixty years;
Gird on thy trustiest weapon, man thy towers
To fence him in his danger; venture all
For him, and thus much will he do for you!
Bandits and murderers have I seen, who died
Scoffers, impenitent and unconfessed,
But never man betraying thus his host
Who had not trembled. Flower of old Castilians!
[*Addressing the portraits.*
What man is he who thus profanes your presence?

HERNANI.

One who devoutly bends in veneration
For them and thee. The outrage I have done you
Defies alike or patience or redress;
But I have blood, a hot ungoverned tide,
O'erswelling bound and barrier — let it gush!
Cleanse thy polluted sanctuary, and be
The rest forgotten!

ZANTHE.

Nay! Strike rather here!
Hence was the sin, hence flow the expiation.
This heart, defiled with pity for the brave,
Be the peace-offering to thine anger.

DON LEO.

Neither.
It is not thus the sacrifice is made
To my insulted honour. Leave us.

ZANTHE.

Wherefore?
That look I know; it 'bodes some fatal purpose,—
Death or a living sepulchre! Forbear,
For he is as noble as thyself; deserving
Thy love as mine.

DON LEO (*roused*).

Thine?

ZANTHE.

No, no!

DON LEO.

'T is enough. [*A trumpet sounds.* LEO *draws his sword.*

Enter ISADORE, C.

What sound is that?

ISADORE.

My lord, the King in person,
Attended by a troop of archers, claims
Admittance by his herald's trumpet.

DON LEO (*calmly*).

Claims!

ZANTHE.

The King! 'T is fatal!

ISADORE.

Our delay offends him; but your command—

DON LEO.

Well, for the King we 'll waive it;
Admit him.

ZANTHE.

He is lost! [*Exit* ISADORE, C.

[DON LEO *goes to a large picture,* L., *of himself, which is the last on the left, and presses a spring, when the picture opens like a door, and discovers a recess in the wall.*

HERNANI (*not observing him*).

He triumphs!

DON LEO.

No. [*Points to the recess* L.

HERNANI.

Ah!

DON LEO.

Enter.

HERNANI.

Gladly.
Rescued from him, dispose me as you will.
[*Enters the recess* L.; *it closes on him.*

ZANTHE (*exultingly*).

Does he relent — protect him still!

Enter ISADORE, C.

ISADORE.

His Highness the King.

[*A flourish of drums and trumpets.* ZANTHE *throws on her veil. The folding doors open and the* KING *enters in warlike attire, followed by Arquebusiers, Archers, Gentlemen-at-Arms, etc.; he advances deliberately,* C., *and fixes on* DON LEO, R., *a look of anger and distrust. The* DUKE *meets and salutes him with profound respect. The* KING, *on approaching, raises his head abruptly, and as in rebuke.*

DON CARLOS.

How comes it, cousin, that to-day
Your bolts and bars are so tenacious? Why
This watch and ward, question, and hostile parley?
Your falchion, too, still glittering in your grasp!
I thought it rusty.
[*The* DUKE *goes to speak; the* KING *stops him by an imperial gesture.*
Put it up. Are *we*
Encountered like a troop of turban'd foes?
Am I a Saib, a Mahomet, or Carlos,
That your portcullis falls at my approach?

DON LEO.

My liege —

DON CARLOS (*to his Attendants*).

Secure the keys. Let every door
Be guarded strongly. Is it here I find
Expiring treason nourished and restored?
Of that devouring fire that long has blazed
Even in our faces, yet a spark remains;
Where is it smouldering, to be fann'd and foster'd?
'T is here. The outlaw chief is in the castle.

DON LEO.

My liege, 't is true.

DON CARLOS.

Surrender him, or wear
His chains thyself. Choose.

DON LEO.

My election 's easy.
To take *me* fettered or to leave me free,
Is the sole choice I can accord your Highness.

DON CARLOS.

Defer your pleasantry. I trifle not.
Bring forth your prisoner; I must have him; think on't.

[*The* DUKE *crosses his arms and pauses in brief deliberation; then raises his head and leads the* KING *to the most ancient of the portraits,* L. U. E. DONNA ZANTHE *watching him with great agitation.*

DON LEO.

Sire, by your gracious leave, behold the first,
The founder, of our race, Don Silvias, —
The father of its glory. Thrice in Rome,
Still great, was he elected consul, and recalled
The days when she was greatest. Next to him
Stands Ruy Gomez, worthy to succeed him, —
Grand master of St. James and Calatrava.
Three hundred standards,
In thirty battles fought and won, he made
His trophies and memorial. For the king
He conquered Moril, Suez, Antiquera,
And died in poverty. Salute him, sire.

[*He himself uncovers and bends in salutation; the* KING *exhibits constant impatience;* DON LEO *passes to another.*

His son, Don Gaspar, follows, — the reproachless;
Amidst corruption, incorruptible;
Whose hand to touch had sanctified an oath.
Your patience, — for I will not multiply
An echo of renown still equal, still
The highest! Here 's my father, — undegenerate!
Friendship's proud champion! With six hundred spears
His friend Don Alvar Giron he redeemed
From hostile thousands.

DON CARLOS.

I demand my prisoner.

DON LEO.

Show me, sire, but one of these
Had soiled his honour and betrayed his guest.

DON CARLOS.

Hernani!

DON LEO.

Here is another yet. His son, myself,
[*Pointing to his own portrait.*
Has dared take place beside him, and must not
Disgrace him.

DON CARLOS.

The rebel's head or yours.

DON LEO.

For surety, sire,
Take that within your reach.

DON CARLOS.

Beware of both. [*To his Suite*]
From topmost tower to deepest dungeon, search
The castle through.

DON LEO.

My castle, like its lord,
Is firm and faithful, and will keep our secret.

DON CARLOS.

This, to thy King!

DON LEO.

This, and a brief addition. [*With firm resolution.*]
From base to battlement, till stone from stone

Be sundered, and their master limb from limb,
Master he will be, and his guest secure.

DON CARLOS.

Is 't resolved?

DON LEO.

It is.

DON CARLOS.

Arrest him!

[*Guards disarm him.* ZANTHE *throws up her veil.*

ZANTHE (R.)

Hold! Carlos, the brave, the great!
You are a wicked king;
Nor have a true and noble Spanish heart,
Like him you seek, or him you would oppress.

DON CARLOS.

Judgment so harsh ne'er uttered voice so gentle.
[*Approaches her and lowers his tone.*
I am what you have made me,— will be still.
If you would teach me mercy, let me learn it
From your example, not your precepts, Donna.
Still to be cruel, where you look for kindness,
Flatters the saucy satirist alone,
Who calls your sex unreasonable.

ZANTHE.

Sire,
Kings are no traffickers in grace and bounty,
But deal it unconditioned, or 't is none.

DON CARLOS.

Be it so,
You shall prevail. Release him. Brave De Sylva,
My long esteem, and a soft influence here,

Still shake our stern resolve. We cannot see you
In Spanish hands a captive; well assured
Your loyalty will suffer brief suspense.
Meantime, we 'll only take, by way of hostage,
Your kinsmaid here, — your Donna Zanthe.

DON LEO.

Take her.
Only take —

ZANTHE.

Me!

DON CARLOS.

Fair maid, you go with us.

DON LEO.

No more! Oh, admirable clemency!
Most gracious monarch, who can thus respect
A servant's head to wring his heart!

DON CARLOS.

A choice
Remains with thee, — your Donna Zanthe,
Or your vile refugee.

DON LEO.

He must remain.

ZANTHE (*flies to* DON LEO).

Oh, save me!

DON CARLOS.

Trust me; *you* have nought to fear.

ZANTHE (*aside — recovering her thoughts*).

It may be not; and those I go to shield
May die! It is enough. I follow you.

DON CARLOS.

You 're wise, and may confide in me.

ZANTHE (*emphatically*).

I will.

[*Goes to the casket, takes the dagger and conceals it in her bosom.*

DON CARLOS (*aside*).

'T was inspiration! [*To her.*] Come, my gentle hostage,
What seek you there?

ZANTHE.

Sire, 't is a valued token
I would not part from.

DON CARLOS.

You make me curious;
May I not see a toy so prized?

ZANTHE.

Ere long
You may. It is not now a time. [*To* DON LEO.] Farewell.

[*She gives her hand to* DON CARLOS. *They are about to go when* DON LEO, *who had remained absorbed, bursts into a paroxysm of despair.*

DON LEO.

My Zanthe! Heaven and earth! Down with my walls!
Shatter them down, and crush me! What remains
When she is gone? Leave *her*, and take all else.

DON CARLOS.

My prisoner then.

DON LEO (*dropping his head, and after great agitation raising his clasped hands towards the portraits*).

You are relentless. [*To the* KING.

DON CARLOS.

Fixed!

[DON LEO *advances slowly towards his portrait.* ZANTHE *watches him with breathless anxiety.*

ZANTHE.

I am chilled!

DON LEO (*nearly reaching the spot, and again looking up*).

Lo! every eye
Flashes indignant lightning while I pause.
Base falterer! Suspense should damn thee — [*Struggles.*]
No,
The pang is past! Take her, and leave me still
My proud inheritance.

DON CARLOS.

Even make the most of it.
Heaven speed you, cousin.
[*Flourish of drums and trumpets. Exeunt* KING, ZANTHE, *and Attendants,* C.

DON LEO.

[*Watches them in wild emotion for a moment, grappling for his dagger, then returns, gasping, and remains awhile motionless; then looking round, and finding himself alone, withdraws two swords from a panoply, measures and places them on a table; then proceeds to the spring and opens the recess.*

Come forth!

HERNANI *enters from panel,* L.

Thou 'rt safe. My honour stands to thee
Clear and acquitted. What is due from thee,
Thou know'st. Select [*Pointing to the swords.*] and let us hence.

HERNANI.

Contend with thee in arms! So foul a deed
Felon ne'er died for.

DON LEO.

Thou know'st my wrongs, and what alone can right them.
What! closely linked with thee, caressing! loving!
The thought for ever stinging me! 'T were madness!
'T is time, — 't is fit — 't is the sole course of honour
That one of us should die. Such lots are drawn
By brave men with their swords, as ours must be;
Or thy refusal be thy forfeiture, —
For so, by Heaven, I 'll hold it!

HERNANI.

Hold it so.

DON LEO.

Thou 'rt warned.

HERNANI.

I am. The blood of my brave friends
Reproaches me the life you saved. To them
And thee let it atone. The prize is thine;
Be mine the forfeit.

DON LEO.

Make thy last prayer.

HERNANI.

To thee I make it: To behold once more,
And breathe a blessing on thy Donna Zanthe.

DON LEO.

Behold her!

HERNANI.

Nay, let me but hear her voice
Once, and no more!

DON LEO.

Was thy concealment then
So closed against the passing scene?

HERNANI.

For thy sake
I sought its inmost depths.

DON LEO.

And nothing heard?

HERNANI.

Nothing. Yet, what imports it to my boon?

DON LEO.

The King demanded thee or Donna Zanthe.

HERNANI.

And bore her hence?

DON LEO.

For thee my roof was sacred.

HERNANI.

Madman! she's lost; he loves her!

DON LEO.

Loves her!

HERNANI.

Aye, as a lewd and reckless tyrant loves, —
To laugh at thee and me — dishonour her.

DON LEO.

Curse on his treachery! Confiding fool!
Was this his midnight purpose! Ho! within!
[*Attendants appear at* C.
Let all my followers, mounted at the best,
In arms attend me quick. [*Exeunt Attendants,* C.

HERNANI.

And for my boon,
Give but a band of them to my command,
On one great hazard more to set my hate
Against this ravisher, thy Donna Zanthe
To rescue or revenge; by the big throb
That shakes thy own proud heart, oh grant but this!
And should my life escape the desperate issue,
Still, still 't is thine.

DON LEO.

Trust thee! Thou vindicate her!

HERNANI.

Thou hast my bond.

DON LEO.

Unpledged — unwitnessed.

HERNANI.

No;
To these thy ancestors I make appeal, —
[*Then pointing upwards.*
To mine, a race as noble as thine own.
And for a pledge take this, and hear my words.
[*Gives his horn.*
Whate'er befalls me, at whatever time
Or place thou would'st demand my life, 't is thine,
And claim it. Only sound this horn, —
I sha'n't mistake it, — and thy will be done.

DON LEO.

Thy hand! One law then rules us; I will trust thee.
[*Exeunt*, C.

ACT IV.

SCENE. — *The monumental caverns of Aix-la-Chapelle. Spacious vaults of Lombard architecture, low and massy pillars, with ornamental capitals. On the right the tomb of Charlemagne, with a small low door of brass, the inscription "Karolo Magno" rendered conspicuous by the light of a lamp, which is suspended singly from the centre of the vaults. The eye is lost in the undefined depths of the Arcades.*

Enter CARLOS *and* RICARDO, *the latter leading the way with a lantern,* L. U. E.

DON RICARDO.

We have now, my liege, wound through the murky labyrinth. Here, no doubt, the traitors will assemble; and here is your chosen concealment.

DON CARLOS.

We 'll use it anon. Thanks to our diligence and the speed of our horses, we are far in advance of their appointed hour. And this, then, is to be the council hall of conspiracy? They 'll sharpen their daggers on the tomb of Charlemagne, as if Carlos of Castile were unworthy to succeed him. Your list of these formidable conspirators.

DON RICARDO.

'T is here, my liege, with the exception of two who have lately reinforced them, and who appear to be father and son; but their names I know not.

DON CARLOS.

We may soon engrave them on their monument for public information. But in thus disposing of our pigmy

foes, what is our dependence on our friends? The empire, Count, the empire! The crisis of its fate is near at hand.

DON RICARDO.

The council, sire, is at this moment deliberating. You will succeed.

DON CARLOS.

Three voices, as I think, would secure me. Three suffrages! Could I but purchase them for as many cities, — Ghent, Toledo, Salamanca. In Spain or Flanders let them make their choice, and they shall have the richest and the proudest.

DON RICARDO.

'T were a tempting bribe, sire.

DON CARLOS.

'T is nothing, Count, — a trifle. [*Tapping him familiarly.*] Cities, my sagacious friend, may be recovered; the empire once lost becomes a forlorn hope. [RICARDO *puts on his hat.*] Your hat, sir!

DON RICARDO.

My liege, you have touched and familiarly accosted me. I am a grandee of Spain, *ipso facto.*

DON CARLOS.

Ha, ha, ha! You are learned in the law, Count, and prompt at illustration. We venture not to litigate your claim, and therefore, grandee, we must admit you. Our Donna Zanthe, how has she sustained her journey?

DON RICARDO.

Marvellously well, sire, since the worthy duchess you gave her in charge to, and her own experience, have assured her of your Highness's chivalrous forbearance.

DON CARLOS.

Therein she flatters not *my* love, my lord.
But she is woman still, and should I triumph —
Have you considered our impatience, Count?
How shall we quickliest know the council's choice?

DON RICARDO.

From the cannon's mouth, my liege. The discharge of one only will announce the election of the Duke of Saxony; two will report for Francis; and three will thunder for your Highness.

DON CARLOS.

'T is well devised. They 'll boldly speak the worst, unminced with flattery. And now to prepare for our conspirators, — these self-elected guardians of the state and empire! Forget not my instructions.

DON RICARDO.

I do not, my liege.

DON CARLOS.

The key of the monument.

DON RICARDO.

'T is here! [*Gives it.*

DON CARLOS.

Now leave us, and obey our orders strictly.

[*Exit* RICARDO, R.

DON CARLOS (*remains for a time in profound abstraction, then turns toward the tomb of Charlemagne*).

Charlemagne! mighty spirit! now enthroned
Above this coil and buzz of mortal passions,
Oh, let me commune with thee! Say, is all
Thy power, the wisdom and the mastery

Of soul, that with thy mortal nature came
On earth, gone with it, — perished, marbled up
With that poor dust, which balanced with the vilest,
Nor weighs, nor values more? Let them be dumb
Who deem so, while a heart is swelling here,
That unrebuked, even in this awful presence,
Dares hope to track thee in thy giant path,
And do thy mighty deeds. Oh, empire! empire!
Winning thee fairly shall I not desire thee?
And having won thee, when I spot thy purple
With sloth or slavish passion, to my bosom
Take other counsellors than truth and justice,
Then strip it from me, Heaven, and degrade
The mightiest monarch to the meanest man.
And thou, immortal spirit! by my strength;
Sustain me; poise me on my height, and yield me
Awhile thy sanctuary. Dare I enter?
Should I in shadowy majesty behold him,
How would he palsy my presumption? Hark!
What step, save mine, profanes thy sacred rest?
[*Smiling.*] I had forgot. I wait for my assassins.
They come.

[*He enters the tomb and closes it. Several Men enter with cautious step, enveloped in their mantles, finally meet each other, and speak in a low voice.*

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Who goes there?

FIRST CONSPIRATOR (*carrying a lighted torch*).

Ad Augusta.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Per Augusta.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

The saints protect us!

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

The dead befriend us!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Heaven preserve us! [*The sound of other steps.*

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Who goes there?

DE HARO (*in the distance,* c.).

Ad Augusta.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Per Augusta.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Saw you the Duke of Gotha?

DE HARO.

Not an hour ago. He will not fail us.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Methinks I hear his step.

[*The* DUKE *of* GOTHA *and other Conspirators advance from the obscurity in the centre.*

DE HARO.

Who goes there?

GOTHA.

Ad Augusta.

DE HARO.

Per Augusta.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

We are all met.

[*The Conspirators form an open semicircle; the first Conspirator takes the centre.*

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Now, Gotha, your report. What is to be the decision of the Great Council?

GOTHA.

We must prepare for the worst; 't is scarcely doubted the Duke of Saxony's humility will turn their choice on Carlos.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

We must be speedy then. 'T is said his eagerness to snatch at the imperial crown has brought him hither. Let him once wear it and he is safe; his august person becomes sacred; who dares profane it is damned past hope.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

'T is certain. We must secure the safety of our souls, and kill him without loss of time.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Down with him!

ALL.

Agreed!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Let him die! Who shall strike the blow? One arm will despatch him as well as fifty. The reserve will make all sure.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Decide it by lot.

ALL.

Aye, aye, by lot, by lot!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

About it then — your names.

[*The Conspirators write their names on tablets, then tear the leaves, fold them, and throw them into an urn forming an ornament to one of the tombs.*

Now listen every man. To whomsoever
The glorious hazard fall, let him resolve
To strike like an old Roman, and to die
Defying block, wheel, and brand.

ALL.

We do. Draw! draw!

[*First Conspirator draws and opens the lot.*

The name?

FIRST CONSPIRATOR (*reads*).

Hernani!

HERNANI (*starting forward*, L. C.).

'T is mine! A smile of fortune comes at last.
Friends, she has done her best for you, be sure.

DON LEO (*joining him*, L. C.).

I doubt it. You are young, light-tongued, light-witted;
Your arm may be unsteady as your head.
Transfer your right. I 'll buy it at your price,
Tho' 't were your pledge here [*his horn*] and your mortgaged life.

HERNANI.

Your bidding must be better, Duke. My price
I need not name, — Zanthe; or Death is welcome.
My life is yours. The King's belongs to me.

DON LEO.

'T is true. Keep then the rights you have, as I
Will mine.

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

Aye, let him strike; we 'll follow close.

HERNANI.

You may
For I will lead where following shall not shame you.

This Carlos,
Who looks to be fifth emperor of that name,
All despot as he is, claims better of us
Than a base war of darkness and stilletoes.

[*Draws his sword.*

This be our weapon, then.
Show him who strikes, and openly be hailed
Deliverers, or die like martyrs.

DON LEO (*with impatient energy*).

No more.
He dies — no matter how to-morrow. Swear it.

ALL.

We swear!

[*A report of cannon is heard; they pause in silent suspense. The door of the tomb opens, and* DON CARLOS *appears, pale and anxious; a second and third report follow successively; advances to* C. *and stands motionless.*

DON CARLOS.

Signors, aloof! The *Emperor* hears you. What
The angry swarm plunged into night and silence,
And all this muffled thunder but a dream!
Strike! He is here! Carlos,
Now the fifth emperor of that name! You dare not!
But now your torches glared defiance. Has
A breath extinguished them? I must supply
Their places, then.

[*Strikes the brazen door with the key, and the vault is instantly filled with Soldiers bearing torches, and partizans; the* DUKES ALCALA *and* PARMA *at their head.*

HERNANI.

Defend yourselves!

[*Having made an effort, he is overwhelmed with the rest, who offer no resistance, and they are disarmed.*

DON CARLOS.

Vile company, good signor. You are lighted
Now to our mind. Is 't not a goodly blaze?
And shows one face I 'm proud to look upon.

HERNANI.

And in this crowd he is but Carlos, then,
Whom juggled fancy swelled to Charlemagne.

DON RICARDO (*eagerly saluting the* EMPEROR).

Sire! let me welcome you
To empire.

DON CARLOS.

You have been trusty, and my Lord
Grandee, be now my Chamberlain!

DON RICARDO.

Without
Wait two Electors of the Golden Chamber
With their congratulations.

DON CARLOS.

Let them enter!
[*In an under tone.*] And Donna Zanthe!
[RICARDO *ushers in the* KING *of* BOHEMIA *and the* DUKE *of* BAVARIA *crowned and in costumes of state, followed by German Barons carrying the banner of the* EMPEROR, — *a spread eagle, with the escutcheon of Spain in the centre. They salute the* EMPEROR, *who salutes them in return,* C.

DUKE.

King of the Romans! sacred majesty!
We speak the general voice when we proclaim you
Worthily raised to that imperial throne
The proudest monarchs vainly have aspired to!

Frederic of Saxony, elected first,
His conscience yielding to your sounder claim,
In honesty of heart for you renounced it.
Your coronation only waits your presence.

DON CARLOS.

Crowned in default of Frederic the Wise,
We must assert his wisdom in the transfer.
[DONNA ZANTHE *appears from* R. U. E.
And Donna Zanthe comes the first to prove us.

DON RICARDO (*conducting* ZANTHE).

The Emperor.

ZANTHE (R. C.).

Emperor!

HERNANI (L. C.).

Donna Zanthe!

DON LEO (L.).

Ah!

ZANTHE.

Hernani!

DON LEO.

Me she marks not!

ZANTHE.

And a prisoner!

HERNANI.

There is no more to fear on my account!
The worst is on my head.

ZANTHE.

May I
Implore the Emperor's gracious leave to speak,
Doing him justice, hoping for his mercy!

DON CARLOS.

Here you are mistress.

ZANTHE.

If I have been tranquil [*Crosses to* HERNANI.],
'T is that my worst of fears were stolen from me,
Committed to a noble lady's charge,
Ne'er sought in my unwitnessed loneliness,
With honour and with due regard invested.
Had it been otherwise, I had a trinket,
You will remember, as a charm of safety.
Happy I have not been. The Emperor knows
His clemency alone can make me so.

DON CARLOS.

Lady, you go too far. Has he not sapped
The firmest pillar of my throne, — the Duke
De Sylva, prisoner by his side?

ZANTHE.

Don Leo!

DON CARLOS.

A traitor!

DON LEO.

Yes, as Julian was a traitor
To King Rodrigo.

DON CARLOS.

Alcala, let those
Of rank be parted from the rest, to die
As should become them.

[*The Guards divide the prisoners, etc., leaving* HERNANI *and three on* L., *taking the others to* R.

HERNANI.

Slaves! am I then left
To die with dogs? I claim my place with *them*,
And at their head. You, King, that will have me
Exalted to be worth your sword or hatchet,
Know, the same power that made thee what thou art,

Gave me a station in the sight of honour
No jot beneath your level. Let your headsman
Record me in his list of noble martyrs,
Duke of Segovia and Cardona,
Count Albatira, Marquis of Monroy,
Viscount de Gor, and lord of lands unnumbered.
Yes, I am John of Arragon, the exiled
Son of a sire by thine unjustly sentenced
To die upon the scaffold, — the sole heritage
Reserved for me and proudly shared with him,
For I will mount it nothing derogate.
Before the king, the head of a grandee
May bear its bonnet to the block.
[*He puts on his hat; the rest follow his example.*
And now, De Sylva, Lara, and the rest,
Give place to John of Arragon! [*Going over to them,* R.]
Dukes or counts,
I stand before you! Marshals, I demand
A well graced pageant, and a spacious scaffold!

DON CARLOS.

This history we had almost forgotten;
Nor e'en had guessed Hernani had recalled it.

HERNANI.

A festering wound keeps memory awake!

DON CARLOS.

Then part of *my* inheritance, I find,
Is an unreckoned fund of treasured vengeance
For heads King Philip, it appears, chopped off
Without consulting me.

ZANTHE (*kneeling*).

Oh, Emperor,
Of heart imperial! most wise and just!

Be also merciful. If he hath wronged you
'T was rashly, not ignobly, even as I have.
And as you pardon me, so pardon him,
If on no better plea than that I love him;
That he is mine as yours the throne of empire,
And to my heart more dear! that we must live
Or die together. Graciously reply.

DON CARLOS (*a moment pausing*).

Fair Donna, *you* must
Live till this poor world
Supply some image of thine excellence;
Live unobscured, a blessing and example.
Rise, Duchess of Segovia and Cardona,
Countess of Abatira, Viscountess
De Gor —. Your other titles, rebel?

HERNANI.

Is it
The *King* I hear?

DON CARLOS.

No. 'T is the *Emperor*. [*To* ZANTHE.]
You hold them in your lord and husband's right,
Don John of Arragon. Your hand repays them.
[*Joins their hands.*

ZANTHE.

Oh, heavens!

HERNANI.

My liege — [*They go to kneel; the* KING *stops them.*

DON CARLOS.

No more! Our time is brief. [*To* DON LEO.]
How now, old friend, you do not envy him
Nobility, — his own inheritance?

ZANTHE KNEELING BEFORE DON CARLOS.

DON LEO.

No, sire [*aside*] it is not his *nobility*.

HERNANI.

Oh, what a precious balm streams on the wound
That cankered at my heart! 'T is healed for ever.

ZANTHE.

My lord, my life, we suddenly inhabit
Another world.

DON CARLOS (*to himself, his hand on his heart*).

Heart! heart! be satisfied.
The head thy pantings have so long bewildered
Claims now to master thee, and bid thee rest.
Love! Love of aught save the confiding millions
Heaven to our charge consigns, awhile forget we;
Spain, Flanders, Germany, our subject-states,
Be now our mistresses, and, Donna Zanthe,
Farewell. Don John, you would have knelt;
Kneel now.

[HERNANI, *now John of Arragon; he kneels.* CARLOS *places round his neck the collar of the Golden Fleece.*

Accept a bauble some will envy thee,
And rise our knight. Albe those circling arms
Still far more honour thee than our adornment, —
Those arms, the snow-white badge of innocent love,
Pure symbol of domestic bliss, which when
A king enjoys, he dying may proclaim
All else a shadow.

HERNANI.

And am I thus happy,
Standing the guiltiest among the guilty?
They have no Donna Zanthes.

DON CARLOS.

Nor shall need them.
My heart, my eyes, are full of aught but vengeance.
Your names I know not, but all here are pardoned.

DON LEO.

I pardon not so freely.

[*Sullenly disappears in the crowd.*

DON CARLOS (*to* RICARDO).

Prepare that we depart.

[RICARDO *withdraws the crowd, who pass in utter silence through the vaults to* R. U. E. CARLOS *turns towards the tomb of Charlemagne.*

DON CARLOS.

Ascendant shade!
Have I so far invoked thee not in vain?
Uphold me now in the momentous toils,
The thronging cares, a dense and mighty cloud,
That suddenly approaching, daunts my pride
And lours upon my grandeur. I implored thee
Greatly to guide me through my awful trust,
And thou hast whispered me, "Begin with mercy."

[*Tableau.*

ACT V.

SCENE. — *A wide and magnificent terrace in the Palace of Arragon at Saragossa, bordered by a balustrade which crosses the stage, adorned with Moorish arcades, beyond which are seen the gardens, with fountains, bowers, etc., illuminated. In the centre is a broad flight of steps leading to the gardens. The palace, with Gothic and Arabian embellishments, also illuminated on the* R. U. E.; *moonlight.*

DON HENRIQUEZ, DON MATTHIAS, DON RICARDO, *and other Young Nobles come forward from* L. U. E., *conversing with hilarity.*

DON HENRIQUEZ.

By the imperial crown of King Carlos, this is a feast worthy of a prodigal's return, and of the generosity of an emperor.

DON MATTHIAS.

In sooth is it; worthy at once to celebrate a wedding and a coronation, a feast that has studded all the windows in Saragossa with bright eyes, a feast that has set every young foot and every old heart dancing with joy.

DON RICARDO.

Yes, and a few heads reeling, into the bargain.

DON MATTHIAS.

And let decorum wink at it. Never was measure filled to braver lord or fairer lady.

DON RICARDO.

Who would have dreamed our eavesdropping expedition among the rogues and rebels was to end in this? I thought it much their captain escaped with his head.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

He has proved an overmatch for us all, — even for the veteran campaigner, Don Leo, who, in my mind, for generosity and forbearance, transcends the King himself, and bears his disappointment like a sturdy old soldier.

DON RICARDO.

Not so sturdily as you may imagine. You see he has not attended the celebration of the wedding.

DON MATTHIAS.

'T is true! though the Emperor sent a special messenger to enjoin his presence. But 't is time we thought of absenting ourselves also. Hymen, methinks, beckons us away; and not a guest of us, I am confident, but will vote his entertainment superlative.

DON RICARDO.

I beg your pardon, I suspect one black ball.

DON MATTHIAS.

From whom?

DON HENRIQUEZ.

I guess; he means the black domino.

DON RICARDO.

I do.

DON MATTHIAS.

The black domino?

DON HENRIQUEZ.

Why, have n't you remarked, overhung with rainbow garlands, and surrounded by dames and cavaliers in all their brilliant varieties, a spectre in black, leaning with folded arms against a column, in grim and sullen majesty, like Pluto on the wrong side of the Styx?

DON MATTHIAS.

I saw him not.

DON RICARDO.

I marked him well. Hush! here he comes.

[*The Black Domino enters,* L., *and gloomily crosses the stage, absorbed, and not appearing to notice them, and disappears by the flight of steps* R. U. E., *every eye fixed upon him.*

DON MATTHIAS.

Whoe'er he be, he carries it admirably.
Watch him, Henriquez.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

He is at the bottom of the terrace, and now he disappears in the orange grove.

DON RICARDO.

He has my consent to disappear altogether.

Enter DONNA ZANTHE *and* HERNANI, *hand-in-hand,* L. U. E., *their noble guests and masks ranged to do them honour. A salutation of music.*

HERNANI.

Dear friends, accept my grateful thanks.

ZANTHE.

And mine,
From an o'erflowing heart.

DON RICARDO.

Your happiness
Among us all hath circulated freely.

HERNANI.

You and your friends, I hope, are well bestowed
Within the palace, long to be our guests.

DON HENRIQUEZ.

While 't is the Emperor's pleasure 't will be ours.
A happy rest to both.

HERNANI.

Be yours untroubled.
Again we thank you; and good friends, farewell.

[*The company disperse,* R., *accompanied by strain of music, which gradually dies away; and during the following, the lights are extinguished and all is hushed.* HERNANI *and* DONNA ZANTHE *remaining alone.*

HERNANI.

At length we are alone once more,
The festive glare grows dim, the nimble foot
Drags weary to its rest. The song, the minstrel,
The busy tongue of mirth and gratulation, —
All, all, are hushed, and we abandoned wholly
To the sweet silence of our heart's content.
Oh, solitude most welcome!

ZANTHE.

Even so;
For 'mid the blaze and hurry of our fortunes
I yet have seemed as one but half awaken'd
From hideous dreams, o'erdazzled by the light
That strives to break them. Now, assured, I feel
My disenthralment and my happiness.

HERNANI.

Proudly I hear you; yes, the cloud is past.
Snatched from impending wreck, our hopes are now
Harboured in peace and love. And now, bethink thee,
The falling dews may harm thee.

ZANTHE.

How good,
How tender art thou, my beloved Hernani!

HERNANI.

Hernani! Such a man I know there was,
In discontent enshrouded, gloating on
His own dark thoughts, and loving nought beside.
And call you me by his unhallowed name?
I am Don John of Arragon.
The husband of the noble Donna Zanthe,
Envied and happy!

ZANTHE.

Fortune is but just to thee;
These rich habiliments, this badge of honour,
Who, with a better grace, may claim to wear?

HERNANI.

Still you forget my counsel. Will you not
O'ertask your spirits?

ZANTHE.

Yet one little moment;
These stealing tears are not from weariness.
One look, one parting gaze, on this fair scene —
[*From the balustrade.*
My noble Duke of Arragon, come hither.
Inhale the breeze awhile from yonder hills,
Thy sleep will be the sweeter. How profound
The calm is now become. All Nature watches,
Enamoured of our loneliness, to guard it.
With what a fragrance
The rose and orange flower embalm the air!
Elysium! and behold, the moon hath tarried

To shed her first mild lustre o'er this hour.
Living for such a moment, is it not
To live for all that mortals may dare hope for?

HERNANI.

You droop.

ZANTHE.

Methinks I do, and feel as if
Soaring too far above the common lot
I needs must fall; this calm seems now too deep,
And sad. Could I but hear a nightingale
Warbling in mystery, one knows not where,
A lover's lute, or —

[*The distant sound of a horn is heard,* R. U. E.

HERNANI (*startled with terror*).

What appalling sound
Is that?

ZANTHE.

Some spirit hears, — our guardian angel.

HERNANI (*with inward bitterness*).

Yes, 't is our guardian angel. [*Horn sounds again*]. Ah! again.

ZANTHE.

'T is thine own signal!

HERNANI.

Do you recognise it?

ZANTHE.

I do.

HERNANI (*aside*).

And so do I. [*Horn repeated.*

ZANTHE.

Again! Who is it?

HERNANI (*wildly*).

A tiger howling for his prey.

ZANTHE.

My lord!

HERNANI (*with fearful emotion*).

Call me Hernani! Still Hernani! now
That name alone is mine for ever!

ZANTHE.

You are distracted. On my knees I charge you
Tell me the secret of thy thoughts.

HERNANI.

I have sworn —

ZANTHE (*watching him anxiously*).

Sworn what?

HERNANI (*raising his hand to his forehead, and recovering himself*).

Nay, nothing. I know not what I say.

ZANTHE.

You said —

HERNANI.

No matter what. My brain is troubled.
I am not well; but let it not alarm thee.

ZANTHE.

Let me seek something that may relieve thee.

[*Horn repeated.*

HERNANI.

Ere this it should be done — oh!

ZANTHE.

You are suffering keenly.

HERNANI.

Aye, of an ancient wound I thought had healed;
But 't is envenomed newly. [*Aside.*] She must leave us
Listen; there is a coffer I have always
With me.

ZANTHE.

There is? Contains it that will soothe thee?

HERNANI.

I recollect it does. Desire thy page
To seek and bring it hither.

ZANTHE.

'T is an office
For me alone.

HERNANI.

And this is then the lot
The emperor in his magnanimity,
My Donna Zanthe in her matchless love,
Prepared for me. Amid the festal, lo!
The finger on the wall, and in the bower
Of bliss I lead an angel to, a demon
Waits me! A desperate life I pledged to him;
How different is the coin in which I pay
The fatal debt! Yet all is still again.
Perhaps (Heaven grant it!) 't was the sound deceived me.
[*The Mask in the black domino appears at the end of the terrace,* R. HERNANI *shrinks at the sight, and stands petrified.*

DON LEO.

"Whate'er befall me, at whatever time,
Or place thou would'st demand my life, 't is thine,

And claim it. Only sound this horn,
I shall not mistake it, and thy will be done."
This compact by the noble dead was witnessed,
Yet performed it is not.

HERNANI.

'T is he.

DON LEO.

I claim my right.

HERNANI.

Take it. I am prepared.

DON LEO.

I am no executioner. Proud honour
Pays its own debts, nor waits disgraceful seizure.

HERNANI.

Show me the means.

DON LEO.

They are not wanting. I
Come both to claim and share thy sacrifice,
And bring a potion which will deal quickly with us,
Or, if thou wilt, a dagger; make thy choice,
And the alternative be mine.

HERNANI.

The poison.

DON LEO.

Thou 'rt prompt, and bravely wilt give up the soul
Of a Castilian nobleman. 'T is here. [*Gives it.*]
Thy hand. Now, mercy for us both! Drink thou,
And I will strike. Dost shrink?

HERNANI.

I do.
Thy claim is sacred, I disown it not;

Yet, if thou 'rt human, art not more than fiend,
Only till to-morrow
Remit thy claim. Strike not this icy horror
To the warm bosom of an innocent bride,
But grant one day for lenity.

DON LEO.

Ha! ha! ha!
To-morrow! Am I for thy mirth? Think'st thou
The raging fire that feeds upon my heart
Will leave its pulses beating till to-morrow?
Shame on thy trifling! Fate is urgent with me,
And we must die together.

HERNANI.

Demon! — hence!

DON LEO (*tauntingly*).

Why so? 'T was but an oath,
Pledged by the honour of thy ancestors, —
Thy father's and thine own.

HERNANI.

Yet for thy name man, the world thou livest in —

DON LEO.

I deal with it as it has dealt with me.
Art thou a slave, a liar, and a coward,
Or the legitimate Duke of Arragon?

HERNANI.

Art thou —

DON LEO.

I am a rock the whirlwind stirs not.
Confront thine infamy or die!

Don Leo, Hernani, and Zanthe.

HERNANI.

No more.
This do I quaff to thine eternal torment.

[*Goes to drink, when* DONNA ZANTHE *enters* L., *suddenly. She speaks as she enters, then observes him with surprise.*

ZANTHE.

I found it not. What drug is that? You shudder.
My voice affrights thee. Here are some dark doings
Thou would'st conceal from me. Still silent.

[*The Mask strikes her attention, and discovers himself.*

Ah!
Horrible vision! wherefore are ye met
Thus secretly? He brings thee poison! Speak!

HERNANI.

I cannot.

ZANTHE.

Cannot? Am I not thy wife that thus
Thou deal'st with me in dreadful mystery?
I must be told the truth.

HERNANI.

And art thou doomed
From me to hear it? I sold
My life to him, when it was cheaply bartered
For present safety, and reserv'd in trust
To save thee from dishonour. 'T was my bond.

ZANTHE.

An impious bond!

DON LEO.

An oath,—
A soldier's, and a noble Spaniard's oath.

ZANTHE.

A devilish oath.

HERNANI.

An oath inviolable.

ZANTHE.

A vain, a guilty, and a damning oath!
Tremble, both.
Idolaters! an earthly god you worship
In mockery of the Great Eternal [*Draws a dagger.*] Lo!
[*To* DON LEO.]
My fears have armed me, and thou know'st me not.
Am I not of thy race? Thy wrathful blood
On thee I'll prove. My father had assail'd
My husband's life at peril of his own,
As thou dost. No relenting word? Forgive me!
[*Throws away the dagger, and falls at his feet.*
Alas! Alas! Have pity on us both;
I am a fond weak woman, and my heart
Still yearns to love thee as it ever loved.
I am subdued, and at thy feet implore thee,
Spare him. Have pity on us both!

HERNANI.

Canst thou
Thus humble thee in vain? The fiend is smiling.

ZANTHE.

A smile of mercy, of compassion. Look!
[*Alluding to* HERNANI.
Behold him in his bravery! And canst thou
Kill him for loving me? 'T is past recall.
I 'm sworn to him.

DON LEO.

And he to me.

ZANTHE.

Let him —
Let him do flintiest penance, but not die.

HERNANI.

Delude thee not,
Dishonoured must I live, or here must die

DON LEO.

The choice perplexes thee.

HERNANI.

Thou liest!

[*Raises the poison,* ZANTHE *still opposing.*

ZANTHE.

Hold!
Oh, hear, yet hear me both, ye cruel men!
I am a wife, and to a dying husband
Would ease a bursting heart.

DON LEO.

Be brief. We wait.

ZANTHE (*bewildered, hanging on him*).

A moment.
Let me say all, and then I shall be strong.
[*Leaning on* HERNANI, *she convulsively grasps the poison.*
I have it! Slay him now some other way.

DON LEO.

Woman, farewell! The power is left me still
To trumpet forth thy shame on earth, and then
To tell this tale among thine ancestors.

HERNANI.

Yet stay! [*To* ZANTHE.] Be firm and hear me. My proud
Zanthe,
Lofty of soul as beautiful of form!
Shall I then live to bear about the brand
Of perjury and dastard fear, disgrace
Nobility, endure the taunting finger
That marks me out a recreant to my name,
Outcast of honour, and the stain of knighthood,
'Till even thyself despise me? No, I charge thee,
By the pure passion of our hearts, restore
The poison!

ZANTHE.

These are solemn words. Awhile
I will consider them.
[*Retires a little, suddenly drinks of the phial, and then presents it to him.*
Drink now.

HERNANI.

What hast thou done?

DON LEO (*horror-stricken*).

Was it for her?

HERNANI.

Murderer, dost shrink at last?
It is too late.

ZANTHE.

Be satisfied; thy share
Is left thee. Hadst thou done as much
For me, thou selfish lord? But I'm content.
Now sacrifice thee to thy phantom god.

HERNANI (*gazing in anguish*).

A death so fearful —

ZANTHE.

No, 't is nothing fearful.
We 'll sleep together still, soundly and sweetly
As on our bed of down.

HERNANI (*to* DON LEO).

Still I forget thee.

[*Drinks and throws away the phial.*

Now revel in thy work.

ZANTHE (*clinging to him*).

Didst drink it? Would thou hadst not.
'T will gender in thy heart a nest of vipers.
They are here with tongues of fire. And now 't is ice, —
A drowsy chill. Dost thou not suffer?

HERNANI.

Nothing.

ZANTHE.

Then lay me down to rest, and come thou too,

[*She sinks gently down in his embrace.*

Thy bride looks somewhat pale, I fear; but thou
Still lovest her; in thy arms she still will rest,
And 't will content her.

HERNANI.

These pangs! Yet hers are soothed.

ZANTHE.

Where art thou?
'T is dark, but soon we shall ascend together
To realms of light.

HERNANI (*becoming faint*).

Dark — dark, indeed, hath been
My doom; yet all I prayed for at the worst
Was thus to die, my lips upon this hand.

DON LEO.

Die, die, that I may hear no more! They 're happy!

ZANTHE.

My love!

HERNANI.

I 'm dizzy — and thy sufferings!

ZANTHE.

Gone, —
Quite gone.

HERNANI.

Then all is well — 't is mercy — oh!

[*Falls and expires.*

ZANTHE.

Before me?

DON LEO.

Dead!

ZANTHE.

No, no,
He sleeps. Thou, angry Duke, awake him not.
He is my husband — this our bridal bed.
Hush — trouble not our dreams — near, near.

[*Turns his face, and draws it towards her.*

And now —
Good night. [*Dies.*

DON LEO.

Dead! dead! and smiling still.
Within there! ho! A murderer in the palace!
The rack! The rack!

Enter DON HENRIQUEZ *and* DON MATTHIAS, *followed by the other guests,* S. R. E.

DON LEO.

Flames!
Flames! and the rack! Torture my limbs — and ease
My soul. It is too late.

[*Gasps and expires in their arms.*

Tableau — solemn music — and

CURTAIN.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The King.
The Mask.
Count Jean de Créqui.
Cardinal Mazarin.
Guillot-Gorju.
Tagus.
Count de Bussy.
Duke de Chaulne.
Count de Brézé.
Viscount d'Embrun.
Benoit de Trévoux, *Lieutenant of Police.*
M. de la Ferté-Irlan.
Chandenier.
A Bourgeois.
A Captain of a District.
A Jailer.
The Queen-Mother.
Alix de Ponthieu.
Dame Claude.

Gentlemen, Peasants, Soldiers, Exempts, etc.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

ACT I.

Scene. — *A little deserted square near the gate of the hotel Bussy, into which run two or three streets. In the back scene the three steeples of St. Germain-des-Prés appear above some houses. On the rising of the curtain two men are in front of the scene, one of whom,* Guillot-Gorju, *has nearly finished dressing the other in clothes similar to his own; namely, the fantastic and ragged costume of the mountebanks of Callot. The other has already put on yellow stockings, shoes with extravagant puffs, breeches of old black silk, and jerkin. The costumes of the two men are exactly alike, so that one of them might be easily taken for the other. The garments abandoned by the man who is disguising himself lie on the ground. They are dark in colour, but rich in appearance.*

A few steps further off, another man — also clad like a "merry andrew," — has nearly finished constructing, with poles fixed in the chinks of the pavement, tatters of damask silk and other old cloths, a booth, such as charlatans use, with a stage on the outside; and within, a table, juggling-cups, a pack of cards, a big drum, two dilapidated straw chairs, and a valise filled with drugs and phials.

At the side is a little hand-cart.

During the first three scenes townspeople are passing up and down at the back of the theatre.

SCENE I.

Guillot-Gorju, The Man, Tagus, *busy at the booth.*

GUILLOT.

The job is done. Now you 're another man.

[*He examines the man he is disguising with complacency.*

Why, you are really like me! Well, that 's strange!

THE MAN.

You think I 'll do? When will the lady come?

GUILLOT.

Towards dusk.

THE MAN.

She 's young?

GUILLOT.

Oh, yes! You may believe
That you 're in luck. [*Mysteriously.*]
When the coast 's clear at eight,
Or thereabout, you 'll hear in you dark corner,
[*He points to the back of the square.*
Three claps, like this. [*He claps his hands three times.*
Then you must say aloud:
"God alone 's master! Compiègne and Pierrefonds!"
She will appear.

THE MAN.

Be sure to keep my secret!

GUILLOT (*with a gesture of protest*).

Oh, comrade! Trust in me!

THE MAN.

You cannot tell
Her name?

GUILLOT.

I know it not. The night I saw her,
[*He points out a hovel on the right.*
Before that hut, there was no light.

THE MAN.

The scheme
Is bold, indeed!

GUILLOT.

The lady, of high rank!

THE MAN.

What interest drives her on this perilous course?

GUILLOT.

Why, she is young! I' faith! youth is the time
When one will spend wherever God points out
The generous sentiments that fill the soul.
We 're ready then for every sacrifice;
And if on reason we cannot lay hold,
Its semblance satisfies us. The first breeze
That passes by us bears away our veil.
Now, do not frighten her by raising hers.

THE MAN.

And does she know the prisoner's name?

GUILLOT.

Oh, no!
That terrible name is hidden from mankind, —
Except the Queen and my lord cardinal.

THE MAN.

How is it she seeks your aid in this affair?

GUILLOT.

You see we 're rather famed for breaking loose!
There is no wall too high to stop our passage,
And bolts and bars are toys with which we play!
From the Bastille I have dragged out Schomberg,
From Vincennes, the great Admiral of Castile,
Gif from the Temple, and Lescur I freed
From the old keep of Amiens; we find
People who serve us everywhere. Though thieves
And vagabonds, we even meet with friends
Among the Jesuits.

THE MAN.

If this affair
Have the results I hope, I will employ you.
Then you are certain that, without mistrust,
This lady, thinking that she speaks to you,
Will tell me all her plans.

GUILLOT.

So I believe.

THE MAN (*taking a purse from the clothes lying on the ground*).

Here are your hundred louis.

GUILLOT.

Captain, thanks.

THE MAN.

Ah! by the way, the letter that you stole
From the Queen's messenger.
[GUILLOT *hands him a letter which he examines and then puts by carefully.*]
Pray, tell me how
You managed that.

GUILLOT.

It 's easy to explain.
It happened yesterday that on the road
That leads to Spain Tagus and I were strolling.
And as we walked along in pleasant converse
There galloped by a gentleman, who stopped
At the Croix de Berry. Tagus is no fool,
And said to me, "That fellow 's in a heat
And sure to drain a glass." And so it was;
He squatted at a table near the church.
Then Tagus made a hole in his valise,

And from it jumped the letter and some ducats.
Had we been seen, the thing was rather awkward,
But unsuspicious rode our man away.

THE MAN (*aside*).

On what mere chance the fate of empires rests!
[*Aloud.*] Do you believe the townsmen who may loiter
Around the square will take me for you?

GUILLOT (*presenting him an overcoat of old black velvet and a big hood of yellow silk*).

Yes;
Put on my Algerine cloak and silken hood.
Your wig is black like mine, so is your hair;
In figure and in bearing we are brothers;
Each has a tuneful voice. Speak high, shout loud.
You 're sure to take them in.

THE MAN (*putting on the overcoat and hood*).

But then your servant?

GUILLOT.

Oh, Tagus — 'T is his instinct to see all
And to say nought. He will be blindly led.
God's cross! — you courtiers know it well — a man
Can be trained like a dog.

THE MAN.

Retz never said
A truer thing himself. — O God who rulest!
Omnipotent God! what good to live in dens,
If among robbers man grows as depraved
As in a court! [*To* GUILLOT.] Do not betray me, and
Let me not see your face again.

95024

GUILLOT (*with theatrical emphasis*).

This doublet
Never has hid a traitor's skin.

THE MAN (*smiling*).

But then
Your doublet scarcely hides your skin at all.

GUILLOT.

Fear not! fear not!
[*He picks up an old bulged and broken hat, adorned with a faded yellow feather, and says majestically.*
Behold your hat, my lord!
[*Calling Tagus, who has been busy at the booth all this time.*
Tagus, behold your master! [TAGUS *bows.*]
Be obedient,
Be docile, for he is my second self.
[*He dismisses* TAGUS *with a gesture and turns to* THE MAN.
For you — rest tranquil! I will not conceal
The fact that I am going far from hence;
For artists such as we, Paris has grown
An insalubrious spot.

THE MAN.

For shame! Gorju,
On such a pleasant road do you retreat?

GUILLOT.

The Chatelet's officers have of late become
A little too absurd. But, by the way,
Do you know anything of palmistry?

THE MAN.

A little. 'T is a graceful art.

GUILLOT.

In truth
The oldest, noblest of all arts, whereby

The hand discovers what the heart conceals.
And so it happens dames of high estate
Come often to consult me on the future.

THE MAN (*astonished*).

This happens often?

GUILLOT.

Yes.

THE MAN.

And here?

GUILLOT.

Even here.

THE MAN.

In open air?

GUILLOT.

They lower their veils, and then
We draw the hangings.
[*He points to a frightful old rag hanging from the poles.*
Next, we — improvise.

THE MAN.

Courage! I 'll risk it!

GUILLOT (*showing the valise full of phials*).

There are the elixirs.
[*He opens a drawer in the table.*
And if you need to write, both ink and paper.
[*He gathers the clothes on the ground and makes a bundle of them, first taking from them a large brown cloak in which he muffles himself, and the felt hat of* THE MAN, *new, and adorned with plumes, which he places on his head.*
The hour draws nigh when the good citizens
Will pass this way. I 'm off. Ah, I forgot!
In duty, I must put you on your guard.

The man who bears my name runs, good my lord,
Some risk of being hanged.

THE MAN.

You think so, really?
He who bears mine, good friend, may lose his head.

GUILLOT.

God save you then!

THE MAN.

He 'll have no easy task,
As you well see. Good-bye.

[GUILLOT-GORJU *departs. Left alone,* THE MAN *sits on a stone post lying on the ground, draws from his pocket the letter* GUILLOT-GORJU *gave him, and appears to read it with deep attention, which soon changes to deep meditation;* TAGUS *is arranging the phials and mending the old tapestry of the booth.*

SCENE II.

THE MAN (*alone, his eyes fixed on the letter*).

In Gascony
A fleet — an army raised in Piedmont too —
At Madrid agents — [*Raising his head.*] and the Queen has also
Her own particular schemes. [*Musing.*] But this young girl, —
A star that leaves its sphere, — how does she come
To mix in such dark plots? This Mazarin
Is only fit to taint whate'er he touches!
There 's nothing in the fellow! Oh, those kings!
How well they chose their servants! If there be
A black knave in some hole, who yearns to wear

A red soutane, a rogue who licks the hand
He 'll later bite, a sham priest and sham noble,
Of bastard soul, who filters through his sieve,
Alike both King and people, and whose mind
Is but a grewsome solvent loosening all, —
'T is such as he the Bourbons will select,
As once the Valois did, by righteous laws
To raise the people up and give new life
And energy to all, both throne and realm.
In his polluted hands they place the State,
From royal palace to the peasant's hut,
From high to low, from granary to cellar,
And of a poisoner they make a cook!

[*Fixing his eyes musingly on the letter.*

For certain — if the plot succeeds — we might
The Comté win from Spain — and without war.

[*He falls again into a fit of reverie and resumes the reading of the letter.*

The DUKE DE CHAULNE *and* COUNT DE BUSSY *enter from the back of the theatre, speaking low and with a kind of mystery, without seeing* THE MAN *or being seen by him.*

SCENE III.

The DUKE DE CHAULNE, *the* COUNT DE BUSSY, *both in city costume.* THE MAN *in a corner;* TAGUS *always in the booth.*

DE BUSSY.

Oh, yes! The story 's passing strange, in truth;
It was two years before the King was born.

DE CHAULNE.

In thirty-six?

DE BUSSY.

You 're right. There 's near Compiègne
An ancient castle, built, it really seems,
With a design to gull some strict duenna
Or jealous husband for a lover's gain,
Such skill the worthy architect has shown,
In hidden galleries and secret doors,
As if to further a discreet intrigue!

DE CHAULNE.

My dear, I know it! It 's Plessis-les-Rois, —
A ruined manor hidden in the woods,
And under it a long and secret passage,
Dug, it is rumoured, while the late King reigned,
Which with the Castle of Compiègne connects.
Filled in again, it was again remade
By Mazarin, who with the Queen alone
Has access to the secret path. It 's said
That in its depths those doubtful nuptial rites
Which bind her to that paltry man took place,
Thanks to a dispensation from the Pope.
There they can talk together at their ease,
And there they sometimes go to quarrel.

DE BUSSY.

True.
There chanced to be at that time at Compiègne
A nobleman, whose name I fear 's extinct, —
Jean de Créqui.

DE CHAULNE.

By heavens! a handsome lad!

DE BUSSY.

And, on the other hand, Plessis-les-Rois
Had for sole garrison a tender belle

Who lived secluded from the world. Jean knew
All the approaches to the manor, and,
Love favouring his crafty stratagems, —
Jean was no fool, — he stormed the citadel,
And found himself in Beauty's chamber. Now,
Later he learned — how, I scarcely know —
That the fair lady was his brother's wife.
(I give the facts, arrange them as you will.)
The worst, or best, of this was that a girl
Was born after nine months had elapsed, —
A girl without reproach, a legal girl,
As none could be more married than her mother.
But then Count Jean! — It 's ticklish, as you see.

DE CHAULNE.

The girl is named?

DE BUSSY.

Alix de Ponthieu.
At present she 's an orphan, I believe.

DE CHAULNE.

Where does she live?

DE BUSSY.

Deuce take me if I know!
She lives alone, — a rare thing at seventeen.

DE CHAULNE.

And handsome?

DE BUSSY.

As the day. Jean de Créqui
To this young girl gave henceforth all his love.
As to himself, — the story 's of long date, —
For ten years he has vanished from the stage,
Proscribed for plotting.

DE CHAULNE.

Ah! Yes, I remember, —
By Mazarin. The Luynes have his lands.

DE BUSSY.

If he return, the scaffold has his head.

[*The two gentlemen continue talking and leave the square. For some moments* TAGUS *has been near* THE MAN, *without succeeding in attracting his attention; at last he determines to address him.*

SCENE IV.

THE MAN, TAGUS, *afterward townspeople, men and women.*

TAGUS.

Say, master?

THE MAN.

Eh?

TAGUS.

Ought we not to get ready?

THE MAN.

Do so.

TAGUS.

You know the townsfolk are about
To leave the market-place of Saint Germain —
Please give me then a hand.

[THE MAN *helps him in hoisting the big drum on the stage.*

THE MAN.

Now beat the drum.

[TAGUS *begins beating the drum. A few persons appear here and there at the back of the square. After beating it some time with all his might he stops out of breath.*

THE MAN (*musing, leaning his elbow on the stage*).

A woman mixed with this! — Past comprehension!
[*Turning to* TAGUS.] Say, would you be the man, some day or other,
To do an honest action?

TAGUS.

We 'd be fools!
For such as we an honest action 's dangerous,
And shines with light that flings back perilous gleams.
I do not see besides great profit from it.
Still, do it! Just give me enough to eat
And no one 's more content than I.

THE MAN.

Come, Tagus,
What do you think I am?

TAGUS.

A thief. And more —
To me it matters little!

THE MAN.

Don't you know
That, living in this fashion, some fine day
We shall be, Tagus, strung up by the neck?
We 're bandits, brother!

TAGUS (*seizing the big drum*).

Oh, shake off such thoughts!

[*He beats the drum violently. An audience is formed around the booth, of men, women, children, some old townspeople, and a large number of beggars.*

TAGUS (*on the stage, and shouting with all his strength*).
Hello! all you that want a pleasant life
In this viscounty of our city Paris,
Rustics and townsfolk, come! come, page and lord!
Who wants good health? Who seeks for happiness?
We sell them! You all know that pride, the vices,
Love and the lawyers, fevers, nurses, all
Suggestions lewd and crazy visions hinder
The ends ordained beforehand by the stars.
Come hither! Through us, all men reach good luck!
A good astrologer's the rarest thing!
Manilas is obscure, and Firmique rash;
The raving of L'Arabie's simply shocking;
Junctin will tell too much, and Spina nothing;
Cardan was out about the English King;
Argolus is too Greek, Pontan too Roman;
Leonice and Pezel are too afraid
To leave the beaten track.
[*With immense increase of emphasis.*
Now to find out
All Nature's mysteries from top to bottom;
To draw a horoscope and tell your fortune;
Show every man his future, like Apollo,
By means o' the air, dead bodies, land and water;
To sway Ormusd and baffle Ariman,
Or make a baron's wife a beggar love,
Or to recite the famous Scarron's verse,
Or to predict to each assured success;
For hyleg, antist, or triplicity;
For changing copper into gold before
Your very eyes! for selling marvellous philters
At a mere nothing, — plumbagine, storax
Sublimate, mithridate; for guessing sure
A day, a date, an epoch, there is none, —
No, gentlemen, there is not one who matches
The great Guillot-Gorju, my master. Gaze!

Behold him! Jean Tritème is only fit
To kiss his slippers. As for Ptolemy
He 's but a coxcomb and Calchas a boor!

[*Lively sensation among the audience.* TAGUS *gets down from the tribune out of breath, and says to* THE MAN, *in an undertone.*

It 's your turn, master, while I go and test
The pockets of these ninnyhammers.

THE MAN.

Go.

[*He mounts the stage in his turn. While he is haranguing,* TAGUS *moves among the throng and adroitly explores their breeches, profiting by the attention they direct to the booth.*

THE MAN (*with the tone and impressive emphasis of charlatans*).

My rustic friends, I 've traversed lands and waves.
There is not in an atlas, chart, or map,
A single country I have not surveyed,
Sought, found, explored, inspected, verified!

[TAGUS, *having finished his first round, ascends the tribune, and under cover of his hood shows* THE MAN *his hand full of small coins.*

TAGUS (*in a low tone*).

They 've nought but sous and liards,[1] master!
[*Turning to the people with indignation.*] Scum!
[*He descends and renews his search.*

THE MAN (*continuing*).

I 've seen the King of Algiers play a game
Of dice and laugh. He sat in his elbow-chair.

[1] An old French coin worth about half a cent.

Two lovely broidered birds, whose plumage spreads
Along the back, adorn that elbow-chair.
One drinks, the other eats.

TAGUS (*emptying two pockets with his two hands at the same time*).

[*Aside.*] Nothing but sous!

THE MAN (*taking a phial and showing it to the spectators*).

The elixirs of love! [*To a ragpicker.*]
Pray, madame, have I not
Observed you at Vienna when the court
Was holding a high festival?

TAGUS.

We were
The darlings of Vienna! We were there!

THE MAN.

The Infanta, if my memory 's correct,
Was, on my soul, adorable as Hebe.
She wore a petticoat of flaming grogram.
She came, she went, she laughed, and danced around,
And fuddled herself in such delightful style! —
With wine not taken from the aqueducts.
Oh, 't was Olympus! Kings, archdukes, and dukes! —
[*He displays his phials before the eyes of the crowd.*
Phials for toothache, fever, or a swoon.

TAGUS (*in falsetto*).

Who asks a flask? Who wants a horoscope?

THE MAN.

I come from Portugal! They have a king,
Quite young, — sixteen, — and, faith, a merry lad!

When Obregon, the alcalde now disgraced,
Spake thus: "How can I liberate your Grace
From Count de Valverde?" Thus the prince replied:
"Beat him to death!" with all that sprightliness
So charming at his age. [*With melancholy.*] O youth!
O springtime!
O azure skies of heaven! [*To the crowd.*] Who wants the oils
Of beauty? [*Leaning forward to the purchasers.*] Lily? jasmine? almond? rose?

TAGUS (*with emphasis*).

Speak!

[*While the spectators press around the stage, buying, choosing, and paying,* TAGUS *takes a townsman aside and draws him in front of the theatre by one of the big buttons he has on his dress.*

TAGUS (*confidentially to the Townsman*).

Clown, a great magician is my master!
So great, that —
[*He raises his finger in the air as if to point out an object in the clouds.*
Do you see yon bird?

TOWNSMAN (*raising his head*).

I don't.

TAGUS.

Well, if it pleases him, my master can,
According to the spheres, right or oblique
Or parallel direct its wings!
[*He takes a purse out of one of the pockets of the Townsman.*

TOWNSMAN.

There 's none!

TAGUS.

Look yonder! In the air!

[*He takes a watch from the other pocket.*

TOWNSMAN (*after looking*).

There 's none.

TAGUS.

Your eyes
Are very bad, my friend.

[*Confusion in the audience. The Police appear, Archers, Gendarmes, Exempts, Watchmen, Guards of the Provost, led by a district Police Officer. The crowd scatters.* TAGUS *seems anxious.*

OFFICER (*in a loud voice*).

Which of the rogues
That swindle simple people in that booth
Is Guillot-Gorju?

THE MAN.

I.

OFFICER.

You are my prisoner,
Knave!

THE MAN (*impassive*).

Ah! You might be somewhat more polite.

OFFICER (*to* TAGUS).

You, too, come on!

[*Three Archers surround and drag off* TAGUS, *who struggles.*

THE MAN.

My servant also! Why?

OFFICER.

Monsieur Trévoux, lieutenant of police,
Will question you himself, and he may tell you.
He follows us. Look there!

[TRÉVOUX *appears, clad in black, surrounded by his sergeants.*

THE MAN (*always on the stage, to the bystanders*).

Rustics, retire!
Monsieur Trévoux, lieutenant of police,
Comes hither to consult me, and to proffer
His custom. Grave affairs of State will be
Discussed between us.

[*He descends from the stage and bows to the Lieutenant of Police, then turning to the Archers.*

Soldiers, usher in
The lieutenant of police and close the doors.

[*He draws the old rags that serve for a curtain.* BENOIT TRÉVOUX *enters the booth. The soldiers disperse the crowd.*

SCENE V.

THE MAN, MAITRE BENOIT TRÉVOUX. *Two or three Sergeants within the booth; outside, Police stationed at the approaches to the square.*

THE MAN (*regarding the Lieutenant of Police contemptuously*).

Sir, are you mad?

TRÉVOUX (*astounded*).

Yours is a courteous question!

THE MAN.

Monsieur Trévoux, lieutenant of police,
[*Pointing to the Archers.*] Kindly dismiss these slaves,
these myrmidons.

TRÉVOUX.

Oh, thanks, they are no trouble where they are!

THE MAN (*politely*).

Excuse me. They are irksome and ill-favoured.
Whoever risks a perilous venture must
Take all that follows, be it good or bad.
But pray, what can you gain by capturing me?

TRÉVOUX.

The King will thank me.

THE MAN.

Not you, my dear lord.
The Cardinal 's certain to have all the honour.

TRÉVOUX (*aside, smiling*).

The rascal 's right!

THE MAN.

You 're loathed by Mazarin.
You 're working for his interest, not your own!

TRÉVOUX.

Perhaps. However, as I do my duty,
I am content. I must be vigilant
To see that public order 's not disturbed;
To help the honest, watch at every door,
Guard every purse from bandits of your kind,
Keep free the highways and extirpate thieves,
Brigands, and beggars!

THE MAN.

But are not your aims
Somewhat extravagant?

TRÉVOUX.

To prison, rogue!

THE MAN.

You are a vandal!

TRÉVOUX.

On to the Châtelet

THE MAN.

Oh, very well! I will avenge myself
By stirring up a frightful scandal! Think,
Before you drive me to extremes, that I,
Guillot-Gorju, see and know everything!
For fifteen years without reproach or fear
I've lived, and in your secrets had my eyes —

TRÉVOUX.

And in our pockets also had your hands!
But, knave, you shall be judged!

THE MAN.

Does that delight you?
'T is well! Before the Châtelet's full court
I 'll cry, among a thousand epigrams,
All that your wives are doing night and day!

TRÉVOUX.

Convicted and condemned you shall be too!

THE MAN.

Hold! till I tell you what you are —

TRÉVOUX.

Gorju!

THE MAN.

With proof in hand! [*Lowering his voice.*]
Supposing some one wished
To give you trouble: the three rubies filched
From the Queen's treasury might supply the means.

TRÉVOUX.

The robbers taken by us have been hanged.

THE MAN (*in the ear of* TRÉVOUX).

The rubies taken by you have not been
Restored.

TRÉVOUX (*aside*).

The devil! [*Aloud.*] But give proof —

THE MAN.

Of what?

TRÉVOUX.

Of what you fancy.

THE MAN (*with a majestic smile*).

Oh! I never dwell
Upon things of the sort; in me 't would show
The very worst of taste. Such pedantry
I leave the King's attorney.

TRÉVOUX (*to the Sergeants*).

Move aside. [*To* THE MAN.]
We can talk more at ease. How know you this?

THE MAN.

Faith —

TRÉVOUX (*with interest*).

Take a chair.

THE MAN (*sitting down*).

I know it, as I know —
Pray, hold a moment — of a certain plot —

[TRÉVOUX *dismisses by a gesture the Sergeants, who leave the booth.*

TRÉVOUX (*disturbed*).

A plot? Friend you astound me!

THE MAN (*unmoved*).

And to which
You are a party.

TRÉVOUX (*with increased alarm*).

I? Oh, no!

THE MAN.

There is
A weighty mystery connected with it.
A prisoner —

TRÉVOUX (*quickly*).

Be silent!

THE MAN.

As you like;
I'm willing to be silent.

TRÉVOUX.

No, speak on!

THE MAN.

One day you brought this prisoner near Compiègne,
Where then the court resided, — with what aim?

TRÉVOUX.

Pure chance!

THE MAN.

The circumstances all combine
To prove that in the shade you were devising
A strange encounter. For, though Mazarin
May be the one at whom the plot is aimed,
When it explodes it may perhaps strike higher.

TRÉVOUX.

Be still! How know you this? [*Aside.*] An awful man!

THE MAN.

What you all say, in bed, at church, or table,
Is known to me.
[*He draws from his pocket the letter which he received from* GUILLOT-GORJU.
Observe this letter closely,
And tell me if you recognize the hand.

TRÉVOUX (*casting his eyes on the letter and growing pale*).

I do not.

THE MAN.

Yes, you do.

TRÉVOUX (*aside*).

It is the Queen's!

THE MAN (*smiling*).

Come, come! Be not afraid,— whom should you dread? —
And say like me aloud: "It is the Queen's!"
Observe the address.

TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

"To the King of Spain,
My brother." [*Aside.*] Surely, this man is the fiend!

THE MAN.

Pray read. [*He presents the letter to* TRÉVOUX.

TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

"I have received a sardonyx,
On which is graved a monk's head, from the Pope,
And set it in a ring I ever wear."

THE MAN.

Lower.

TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

"I reckon strongly on your help.
To render sure the issue of our plans
We only need a fleet in Gascony,
And army in Savoy."

THE MAN.

Speak lower still.

TRÉVOUX (*reading in a voice that becomes more and more agitated*).

"No one speaks to me of the prisoner here,
But Mazarin, who, seized with rage, declares
That sooner than see reappear that child
He would, although a priest, infirm and old,
Kill him with his own hands."

THE MAN.

Pray, not so loud.

TRÉVOUX (*reading*).

"Things do not go as I should wish; but still
I have with me Thoiras and De Souvré.
Trévoux, the lieutenant of police, is ours."

[*Pale and interrupting himself.*

Where did you find this letter?

THE MAN.

Pshaw! I have
A number like it. If perchance mishap
Shall overtake me, I forewarn you now,
A friend will make them public — so, beware!
Then do not vex me, and watch o'er my life!

[TRÉVOUX *is for some moments a prey to a great internal struggle. Then he turns abruptly and offers his hand.*

TRÉVOUX.

Let us be friends!

THE MAN (*taking the hand of* TRÉVOUX *and putting on his hat*).

"I do beseech you, Cinna."

TRÉVOUX (*aside*).

No place is sacred from these bandits' eyes!
[*Aloud, with an amiable smile.*
Tell me my friend, are you in want of money?

THE MAN.

My doublet, as you see, has many mouths,
And all attest the fact. Beneath the cloak
Which hides me in its ample folds the devil
With mocking fingers drags my linen out
Through holes that were not furnished by the tailor.

[TRÉVOUX *takes out his portfolio, writes some words with a pencil, then tears out the page and hands it to the man.*

TRÉVOUX.

There is a draft for eighteen hundred livres;
And in return, I ask you for such names
As might be useful, and the State secrets too
With which you are acquainted. Is that clear?

THE MAN (*taking the paper*).

Robber I may be; spy I 'm not, my friend. [*He tears it.*

[TRÉVOUX *opens the hangings of the booth a little and dismisses the Sergeants who have stayed outside.*

TRÉVOUX (*to the Sergeants*).

Begone!

[*They obey in silence. The square becomes deserted.* TRÉVOUX *approaches* THE MAN *affectionately.*

Now we may talk together; none
Can hear. [*Noise of steps in the neighbouring streets.*
Good heavens! some one!

THE MAN.

'T is too bad!
Just as you had become so fond of me!

[*From the little street on the left, opposite that through which the Police, etc., have disappeared, a woman comes forth, veiled, and clad in black. She looks behind her for an instant with anxiety, as if she feared to be observed, then enters the booth hastily.*

SCENE VI.

THE MAN, A VEILED WOMAN, TRÉVOUX. *At the moment the woman enters,* TRÉVOUX *wraps himself, in his cloak and sits down on the stool of* TAGUS, *in the farthest corner of the booth, with his back turned to the light, like one who does not wish to be recognized.*

VEILED WOMAN (*to* THE MAN, *without seeing* TRÉVOUX).

Friend, but two words. Look towards the way I came
And tell me am I followed.

THE MAN.

No.

VEILED WOMAN.

None comes
Behind me?

THE MAN.

Madame, no —

VEILED WOMAN.

'T is well.

THE MAN (*aside*).

Who is 't?

VEILED WOMAN.

You tell their horoscope to passers-by?

THE MAN.

Yes, madame.

VEILED WOMAN.

Good! I come to seek your aid.
Yours is an art in which the expert's eyes
Reach loftier heights the lowlier his degree.
Unconscious of our name he can point out
The path we ought to take. 'T is what I need.
I am a wretched woman. Listen!
[*Perceiving* TRÉVOUX.] Who
Is yonder man?

THE MAN.

My servant. Do not fear.
Is it your wish that I should read your hand?

VEILED WOMAN (*presenting her hand to him*).

Examine it, and tell me what you see.

THE MAN (*aside, looks closely at a ring that glistens on her finger*).

Can it be true? The sardonyx on which
A monk's head is engraved! Why, 't is the Queen!

VEILED WOMAN (*a prey to violent agitation*).

O subtle man! search out with all your power.
Conceive a proud, imperious brow that bends
Beneath the vilest bondage!

THE MAN (*taking off his hat, then going to back and letting the hangings fall*).

Let me close
This window on your Majesty.

VEILED WOMAN (*turning round as if moved by a violent shock*).

From what
Can you tell who I am?

THE MAN (*unmoved*).

Your hand reveals
The name belonging to your Majesty.

VEILED WOMAN.

My hand betrays me! How?

THE MAN.

Its beauty tells!
It is a royal hand — of white and rose!
(*Aside*). And the sardonyx ring has aided much!

VEILED WOMAN.

Well, well! Go on!

THE MAN.

The causes of your grief
Are numbered by the hundred! For you are

The link that binds two royal houses, Queen!
Which, yielding to an unrelenting law,
Drag you in opposite courses, both at once.
To Spain your ancestors belong, to France
Your children. Thus you suffer equal grief
Whether your armies triumph or their foes.
And woes more poignant still the Louvre holds
For your undoing. You have cherished him
Who preys upon you now; and Mazarin,
By you made great, is plotting at this moment
Your ruin. Stone by stone, and noiselessly
You fall each day. The mind of Mazarin
Is the sole window through which looks the King,
Who only sees whate'er that traitor wills,
And in his mad love for the holy man,
Desires to wed his niece, Olympe Mancini.
They flout you, madame; and your bitter plaints
Serve but to raise the mocking laugh. Their feet
Tread blithely on your ruins. Yet you would
Avenge your wrongs, become again a queen,
A mother, prompt to struggle, punished, smite!
But everything for you takes spectral shape;
And in the darkness you have dreams that blanch
Your cheeks with terror.

THE QUEEN (*looking at the man with a mixture of fear, curiosity, and deep surprise*).

Wretch! from whom could you
Have learned such things as these?

THE MAN.

I see them. Know
That, madame, all the secrets of the great
Fall downwards, and the people's eyes pierce through
The shadow of your soul.

THE QUEEN (*lifting her veil*).

Have pity then!
For I am racked, in truth, with torturing fears!
The King, my son, reaches his sixteenth year
Before a month, and then they will complete
This shameful union.

THE MAN (*in a low voice to* THE QUEEN).

And at that same hour,
Another, madame, will be sixteen years!

THE QUEEN (*growing pale*).

Whom speak you of? My friend, you rave.

THE MAN (*continuing in a voice gradually becoming lower and more significant*).

'T is said
The awful likeness — to one whom you know —

[*He looks fixedly at* THE QUEEN *who turns aside in anguish.*

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

What is this man? O God! I meet with eyes
Would penetrate a tomb!

[*She turns round abruptly and looks him in the face.*

Well, you who know
All that is happening, know you, fateful seer,
What said the Cardinal the other day?

THE MAN (*unmoved, but emphasizing his words*).

He said that he, though old — and sick — a priest —
Rather than see him come to life again,
And reappear, — although an old man shudders
At the mere thought of shedding youthful blood, —
With his own hand would slay —

THE QUEEN (*interrupting him in terror*).

One whom to name
You are forbid!

THE MAN (*continuing*).

A captive! —

THE QUEEN (*frantic*).

Hush! your words
Appal me! If I saw not there your eyes
Aglow with life, I would believe I dreamed
And heard the voices of the hideous dead
Who sometimes speak! What art thou then?

THE MAN.

You see, —
A mountebank.

THE QUEEN.

But, say, have visions, then,
Appeared to thee? Thou knowest what kings say —

THE MAN.

And what they do. My art is great.

THE QUEEN (*approaching him*).

I trust
Those fathomless eyes of thine. What shall I do?

THE MAN.

Time is the slave of those who wait. Do you
Your spirit hold in readiness, and bide
Your time; let things alone, and let God's hand,
Fraught with great issues, open o'er those brows,
Whether they be awake or in repose.
Your part you'll have therein, — and each, his own!

THE QUEEN.

O heavens! the hour is passing. I must leave!
Free me from this embarrassment; I would
Return unseen through the wood's entrance gate,
Through which, unseen, I have escaped. 'T is guarded
By Trévoux's people. How can I get through?

THE MAN.

Oh! I can aid you then. My servant, — this
Between ourselves, — can deftly counterfeit
The passes of Trévoux.

THE QUEEN.

Indeed!

THE MAN.

You know
His hand?

THE QUEEN.

I do.

[THE MAN, *opening a drawer in the table and taking from it the pen and paper shown him by* GUILLOT-GORJU, *gives them to the Lieutenant of Police, who, during all this scene, continues in his first position, with his back turned, seated on a stool, and occasionally darting an oblique glance at* THE QUEEN.

THE MAN (*to* MAITRE TRÉVOUX).

Quick! write: "Permit this lady
And her suite to pass."

[*The Lieutenant of Police writes.* THE MAN *takes the paper and presents it to* THE QUEEN, *who examines the writing with astonishment.*

THE QUEEN (*reading*).

Signed "Trévoux!" [*Aside.*] The man's
A sorcerer.

[*She draws the sardonyx ring and gives it to him.*

Stay! in memory of me,
Accept this ring; and should you wish to see me, —
Be it at Compiègne, Saint Germain, the Louvre,
Or elsewhere, — it will open every door.

[THE MAN *drops on one knee, takes the ring and puts it on his finger.* THE QUEEN *makes a sign to him to look round the square. It is becoming dark during the scene.*

No loiterer outside?

[THE MAN *raises the hangings, then turns round.*

THE MAN.

'T is evening, madame.
The citizens have sought their homes.

THE QUEEN.

Adieu!

[*She goes out hastily. As soon as she does so,* THE MAN *goes straight to* MAITRE TRÉVOUX, *who rises.*

THE MAN (*to the Lieutenant of Police, in a grave and firm voice*).

Sir, you must see — and I have no desire
To sham the honest man — that one of us
Holds in his hands the other's head, and that
It is not you. I can destroy you. So
Begone! — you and your spies; and also mind
You ne'er return again. If I behold
One of your creatures here, you are denounced!
Away! Yet, sir, I will consent to say
That, like yourself, I have my secret aims,
And that I am not he for whom you look.

Of your discretion mine will be the measure.
Then silence — as to all! And bear in mind
Traitors in their own snares are ever caught;
And, therefore, no ill tricks. Agreed?

TRÉVOUX (*as if stupefied*).

Agreed.

THE MAN.

Restore to me my servant.

TRÉVOUX (*casting a look of fear on* THE MAN).

This has been
A masterstroke of mine! I thought to seize
A worm, and lo! I grasp a snake. What is
This devil of a man I wonder?

THE MAN (*with a gesture of dismissal*).

Go.

[*The Lieutenant of Police departs.* THE MAN *gazes for some time after him, and then sits down pensively on the overturned post. At the back of the theatre the* DUKE DE CHAULNE *and* COUNT DE BUSSY *return from the same direction in which they left. They advance, talking, to the front of the scene without seeing* THE MAN *or being seen by him.*

THE MAN (*in a reverie*).

The night is falling.

DE CHAULNE (*to* DE BUSSY).

I am haunted by
The story of this De Créqui of yours;
And Alix de Ponthieu I cannot get
Out of my head.

DE BUSSY (*pointing to the street on the left which runs into the square*).

Hold ! look ! It is Brézé,
And roaring like a tempest.

DE CHAULNE (*looking*).

What a rage
The man seems in !

DE BUSSY.

It was to-day he read
That libel on him, scattered far and wide,
In which 't is said he was a thief at Nimes.

DE CHAULNE.

Yes, and 't is rumoured Mazarin inspired
The nameless scribbler.

[*Enter the* COUNT DE BRÉZÉ *and the* VISCOUNT D'EMBRUN *in the dress worn by courtiers in the city.* DE BRÉZÉ *appears violently irritated. He holds a pamphlet in his hand with which he gesticulates furiously. At the loud noise made on his entrance,* THE MAN *turns round, and examines the four gentlemen without being noticed by any of them.*

SCENE VII.

The same. COUNT DE BRÉZÉ, VISCOUNT D'EMBRUN.

DE BRÉZÉ (*to* M. D'EMBRUN).

What care I for all
Your pictures of the evils of the time ?
My sole, my poignant care is this affront, —

[*Rubbing the pamphlet violently between his hands.*
This stupid, monstrous, filthy, base affront
Which I cannot avenge, yet must avenge!

D'EMBRUN.

Be calm. Why, zounds! here are Chaulne and Bussy!
They also are displeased with Mazarin.

DE BRÉZÉ.

Displeased, indeed? I am enraged!

DE BUSSY.

And we
Feel with you.

D'EMBRUN.

Men of gentle birth have been
So curbed that Mazarin can strike them now
With safety. Chaulne has lost his post.

DE BUSSY.

And I
My regiment.

DE BRÉZÉ.

But, Embrun, such an outrage!
The deadliest insult, a "You lie," a blow, —
They 're nought, I swear by heaven! when one can,
In mode befitting foemen of our rank,
Seize his man by the collar, and say: "Come!"
If Uzés chafes Elbeuf, or Gontaut mocks
La Tremouille, or Albret gives offence
To Fontraille, none of these is at a loss,
When the word 's uttered. They 're stout-hearted fellows.
What 's said is said; and so in proud defiance
Of all the laws and regulations made
And Maitre Jean, the headsman, they are off
Upon the morrow, fury in their eyes

And on their purpling brows, with sword in hand
To meet upon the turf in deadly combat.
Then blow for blow, and blood for blood. 'T is right.
You blame, I praise them; these are lions, tigers.
Dreadful but grand, magnificent are they
That, bravely bitten, stoutly bite again!
But, then, a cheat! a scamp! a hateful knave!
Who picks a pebble up to smash my window!
A rascal shaveling, an Italian monk,
A braggart whom a laundress of the wharves
Would drive before her, takes another's claw,
And then, to grandly prove his vaunted prowess,
With it he scratches me! A surpliced rogue!
A starveling thief, by Jove! who, while he mumbles
His paters in the dark, beslobbers me,
And has me outraged by the silly jabber,
Spread by a dirty scribbler, at three sous
The page! Ha! tonsured, mitred wretch, dost thou
Let slip thy bulldogs on me, and in fear
Conceal thyself! If, like a caitiff, I
Do not have him well cudgeled by six lackeys
On the Pont-Neuf before King Henry's statue,
Then call me coxcomb without heart or soul!

DE CHAULNE.

That is, upon my faith, a glorious thought.
I 'm with you.

DE BUSSY.

And to cheer you on I 'll be
Among the cits, tramps, beggars on the causeway!

DE CHAULNE.

I furnish the six lackeys.

DE BUSSY.

I the sticks.

[*For some moments* THE MAN *has been standing, and softly approaches the gentlemen from behind, without being perceived by them, and at the strongest point of their excitement places his hand familiarly on* DE BRÉZÉ'S *shoulder.*

THE MAN (*smiling, to* DE BRÉZÉ, *who turns round astounded*).

To drub a cardinal of the Roman church,
A minister who guides and governs France, —
'T is grand, Brézé, nay, royal, but not easy.

[*The four lords express the liveliest astonishment.*

DE BUSSY.

Whom is this yellow-hooded knave addressing?

D'EMBRUN.

I say, De Chaulne, just lend your cane a moment.
To be apostrophized by God knows whom
Is just a little trying!

THE MAN (*impassive*).

I am Jean
Count de Créqui, Baron de Vaize, my arms
Are or, charged with a plum-tree[1] gules.
In war, my house, without resorting to
Its arriere-ban, can muster Blanchefort, Vaize,
Agoust, Montlor, and Montauban. I am
Grandee of Spain, a title due my mother,
A Farnese. General I was by sea
During the reign of Louis the Thirteenth.
Such was I once. What I am now you see;
The meanest hind stands higher in the State, —
The last ten years proscribed by Mazarin,

[1] Créquier = a wild plum-tree.

A wretched lord, whose ruin is the soil
On which the Dukes de Luynes thrive; a price
Set on my head; a lonely, wandering outcast
Hiding himself from all and helped by none,
Without a friend or kinsman: such I am.
And, now all's said, what think you if we talk
A while?

[*The gentlemen rapidly draw near* JEAN DE CRÉQUI.

DE BRÉZÉ.

Your hand, Créqui! God's death! our lot
Links us together. They dare outrage me
And dared to outlaw you.

DE BUSSY (*observing the features of* DE CRÉQUI *with the air of one trying to recall something to memory*).

[*To* COUNT JEAN.] Yes, 't is Créqui
Your memory is not dead among us.

[*All shake hands with* COUNT JEAN.

DE CHAULNE.

We
Were speaking of you scarce a moment past.

COUNT JEAN.

Thanks, gentlemen.

D'EMBRUN (*examining the costume of* JEAN DE CRÉQUI, *with a gesture of astonishment*).

Count Jean! Well, hang me, if
I 'd ever know you! Faith, you are disguised!

COUNT JEAN.

No; aged. To age a wretched man, Brézé,
Ten years of exile count twice ten of life.

[*To the four gentlemen.*

And now what is your object, gentlemen?
Revenge? I bring it with me. But, good heavens!
Make less hubbub and better play your cards.
For me, I count that gambler laughable,
And hateful too, who slaps, at every trick,
The table with his fists; who howls with rage,
Cursing his aces or his knave of hearts,
Bawling his losses and the cards he holds.
Through all this din the hidden steel is whetting.
For never yet was there a Henry the Third
Who was much troubled by a blustering Guise.
Assail your foe, as policy requires,
With outcry or in shadow, — Richelieu in
The light of noon, but Mazarin at dark.
To-day the mine then, cut and thrust to-morrow.
In ambush half the battle's ever won.
And so, be calm, Brézé, make no more scenes.
Say nothing of your wrongs. Take this advice:
Be sure to keep your office near the King.
Be not afraid; 't will be a noble struggle.
Now, if some one of you should like to know
What object I have had in borrowing
These rags from strollers, why, that is my secret;
And I intend to keep it. Nay, besides,
It is a garb well-suited to an age
As vulgar, false, and double-faced as this, —
An age in which there 's nothing great, except
The public shame; in which where'er we gaze
We see buffoons and fools and charlatans!
Yes, 't is a farce in which all honour 's lost, —
Both yours and mine. On one stage struts De Retz,
And Mazarin upon the other stands,
While Austria holds the manuscript and prompts.
Now I, Jean de Créqui, an outlawed peer,
Considering all shame has left our France,

[*He goes to the table on which stand juggling-cups.*
Who gives herself to quacks, become one too!
And therefore, gentlemen, a very scamp,
I 'll raise uproarious scandal in the streets,
When such seems needful, and, as if the court,
The parliament, the treasury, the Fronde
His Eminence, the clergy, and Sorbonne
Were all my sole concern. My brazen laugh
Shall spread dismay around among you all!
Ah well! But is this mocking travesty
Alone my aim? No, no, my gentle friends;
I have a resolute soul, and help the wronged,
And snap my fingers in the face of power.
But 't is not to my taste to play the censor;
Though rather liking my fantastic role,
To-morrow, if I may, I 'll drop the mask.
"But do you not," you 'll say, "desire at least,
To hurl a thunderbolt at Mazarin's head
From out a cloudless sky, avenge us all,
And repossess your heritage at last?"
No, gentlemen, no, no; although the blood
Beats proudly 'neath this doublet, I 'm too old
To be wrought up to such a point; and though —
As I shall show you — Mazarin must fall,
(At least I think and hope so), still, revenge
Is not my aim, victorious or victim.
In a few words I 'll tell what 's in my heart.
Ten years exiled, my soul was still in France,
My soul, alas! and all my hopes were there.
A child, at once my joy, remorse, and duty,
A dawning ray that lit these dusky brows
And rested faithful on this prostrate head,
When every other light for me was veiled.
A child, a girl to-day — But why relate
A tale to you that touches me alone?

The ghastly secret 's hidden in a tomb.
My pure and lowly dove knows nothing of it,
And ne'er shall learn why I love her so.
But, friends, ten years — ten years, this very month —
Have fled since I have seen that angel! Well,
I cannot live except I hear the voice
Whose music thrills my soul, except I see
The eyes that flame across my troubled gaze, —
In fine, except she 's mine! Ah, sad the lot
The exile bears! Then also round herself
All 's ominous and dim. Did I not say
She was an orphan? She needs all my care.
The last four years I 've lost all trace of her.
(My enemies would let no letter reach me);
I know not where she 's living at this hour.
O God! to see her once again! These tears!
To be allowed to live in France, and dwell
By her dear side, I 've begged and prayed and done
A hundred craven deeds, — told Mazarin
He was illustrious; from Madrid and Rome
Have written to the King — Of no avail!
They would not let me come. At last I said
Within myself: 'T is time to make an end!
You now the reasons know why I, proscribed,
Am in this city; why arrayed in this
Strange, loathsome livery I pledge my life
To such a dark, portentous enterprise,
In which God aids me, and which haply may,
In a swift moment, change the form of France
And aspect of the world by one deep, sudden,
And terrific shock. [*After a moment's silence.*] I 've
told you all;
No further question. Recognize me not;
Avoid my path; but, in your strength and numbers,
Indignant, dumb, be ready for the day

When sudden from the shadow I cry out,
Rising before your 'wildered eyes: "Come on!
The work is done. Speed fast!"

DE BRÉZÉ.

Rely on us.

[*The four lords grasp his hands in silence again with more enthusiasm than ever.*

COUNT JEAN.

I do. Farewell. The hour draws near when I
Would be alone.

[*He conducts the four lords to one of the streets entering the square, then returns to the front of the theatre, and again falls into deep and anxious reverie.*
The lamplighter approaches, lights the lamp, and passes.

COUNT JEAN (*pensive, his forehead resting on his hand*).

This unknown woman! Strange!

[*It is now quite dark. In the distant houses some windows are lit.* TAGUS *appears at the back of the square, and runs towards* COUNT JEAN *with an expression of strange and bewildered joy.*

SCENE VIII.

COUNT JEAN, TAGUS.

TAGUS.

Oh! master, thanks! But for you I was hanged!
I owe my freedom, so they said, to you.
Now, master, lend an ear to what I tell you:
The tawny gypsy lives for him that gives

Him life, and dies for him that saves him. Well!
I am your slave, and where you go, I follow.
If you clutch one end of a red-hot bar,
I 'll clutch the other; and I 'll say to all:
"See yonder worthy gentleman! I love him!
Without his help I should be leading now
A precious dance. Without his help, rocked on
A gibbet by the evening breeze, like one
Caught by the hair while passing 'neath a tree
In some enclosure hemmed by livid walls,
I should be gently brushing with my toes
The tops o' the undergrowth!" I 'm yours, my master.

COUNT JEAN.

All right. Tagus, I trust you too. Go now.

TAGUS.

The Louvre is the King's; the booth is ours.
I needs must take it with me.

[*He sets to work briskly to demolish the booth, pulls up the poles, takes down the hangings and places them on the little hand-cart, which he also loads with the table, chairs, big chest, and all the other chattels belonging to the mountebank.* COUNT JEAN *meanwhile looks on thoughtfully.*

COUNT JEAN.

Where shall I
Find you again?

TAGUS (*all the time working*).

Near the Baudoyer gate,
In the Orme-Saint-Gervais inn.

COUNT JEAN.

Well, well, make haste.

TAGUS (*stopping*).

And, by the way, sergeants are sorry creatures.
They sparkle in the distance, but when one
Gets at close quarters —

[*He draws from his breeches a paper which he hands to* COUNT JEAN.

Master, this is all
I could find in their pockets.

COUNT JEAN (*unfolding the paper, and reading it by the light of the lantern lit at the corner of the street*).

"You can trust
The bearer of the present" — signed "Mazarin."
Indeed? Why, at a crisis this might be
A vast convenience.

[*He puts the paper in his pocket. The work of* TAGUS *is some time finished. The entire booth is on the hand-cart.* TAGUS *approaches* COUNT JEAN *and takes his hand.*

COUNT JEAN.

Go.

[TAGUS *harnesses himself to the hand-cart, and goes out drawing it. When he has disappeared* COUNT JEAN *looks towards the corner of the square which* GUILLOT-GORJU *pointed out to him.*

There 's nothing yet!
[*Returning to the front of the theatre.*
Perhaps — but no —

[*Three blows struck in the hollow of the hands are heard.*

The signal 't is! At last!

[*Raising his voice.*] God alone 's master. Compiègne and Pierrefonds!

[*A woman, quite young, in black, with a long black lace veil, issues at the back of the square, from the angle pointed out by Guillot-Gorju, and advances cautiously and with slow steps towards the court.*

SCENE IX.

COUNT JEAN, *a* YOUNG GIRL, *veiled.*

THE GIRL (*in a whisper*).

A friend? Is 't you?

COUNT JEAN (*equally lowering his voice*).

Yes, madame, I.

THE GIRL.

Alone?

COUNT JEAN.

Alone. Fear not.

THE GIRL (*advancing toward him*).

Well, then?

COUNT JEAN.

Things could not be
In better shape. We 'll break through bolts and bars.
The captive 's saved, since Pierrefonds is his prison,
I know Pierrefonds. And friends disguised as clowns
And soldiers will assist. No danger. If
This jailer, gained by you, is trusty, we
Without great effort shall deliver him.
I answer for success.

THE GIRL.

The road by which
You reach the donjon-keep I can make smooth.
Attend: a week ago the doctors said
That if he never saw a human face,
Mere lassitude, in spite of all their care,
Would kill the captive; nay, e'en as it is,

He 's dying of his duress, and must hear
Some voice, at least, sing in a neighbouring room.
By favour of the jailer, whom I gained,
Of whom I am believed to be a daughter,
I have been chosen to administer
This only remedy of his wasting grief.
Now, on the day appointed we, my friend, —
You on the outside, I within, — shall break,
If God works for us, through these fearful walls,
Escape, and give back happiness and home,
The air and light of heaven and life and soul
To this poor prisoner.

COUNT JEAN.

But once free, we must
Take measures so he be not caught again.
Where will you hide him?

THE GIRL.

There is near Compiègne,
Deep in the woods, a little north Pierrefonds,
A huge old castle full of secret haunts, —
Plessis-les-Rois, — built far from cities, planned
For shelter in the civil wars; where I
Was born, and where, alas! my mother died.
Since then 't is tenantless. We 'll guide him there
Through secret doors concealed from all but me —

COUNT JEAN (*who has listened to* THE YOUNG GIRL *with ever-increasing agitation*).

Great heavens! Madame! You 're Alix de Ponthieu!

THE GIRL.

'T is true. How have you learned?

COUNT JEAN (*falling on his knees*).

Madame, I swear,
Before high heaven, the risk you run is awful!
Withdraw at once — I beg you on my knees —
From such a dark and tragic enterprise!
I am not he you think. I am a man
Who saw your birth, and who, alas! since then,
Consumed by one fell thought, has suffered much, —
An ancient servant of your noble mother,
Who hides his rights and mission, as he ought,
And comes to make atonement 'neath your shadow;
A wretched man, who, if employed by God
In your behalf, shall save you every sorrow
And give you every joy, and yet whose name
You 'll never know; a lion to defend,
A dog to love you!

ALIX.

Sir!

COUNT JEAN.

You called me friend,
A while ago. I am a soldier, old,
Grey-bearded, and I weep! Judge by these tears
The feelings of my heart. Oh, trust my words!
Ah! madame, have some pity and some faith.
Draw near this lamp and let me see your face.
[ALIX *approaches the lantern. He gazes on her with a kind of adoration.*
How tall you 're grown and fair! Oh, what delight
To see you once again! 'T is ten years since, —
Ten weary years! — You 've lost all memory of me,
Yet round that castle where none dwell to-day,
My God! I saw you when you were a child, —
As high as this, — with blushing, rosy face,
Running amid the flowers through sunlit-fields!

Poor child! Ah, trust your friend! who, on his soul,
Tells you the truth! One day you were afraid.
You chanced to meet some wandering gypsies, madame,
And ran to me!

ALIX.

It 's true. I recollect.

COUNT JEAN.

Ah, you begin to see! Then let my voice
Withhold you! What, a woman! a young girl!
Why, those who tamper with the bolts that lock
The prisons of the State do risk their heads!
The project 's dreadful; 't is a crime! an outrage!
'T is utter madness! What! you to attack
The Cardinal himself? And then this prisoner —
Why, what is he to you?

ALIX.

I love him.

COUNT JEAN.

Love him?

ALIX.

Did you suppose that I was acting thus
Because of matters that affect the State?

COUNT JEAN (*aside*).

Oh, fate has seized me with relentless grasp,
As does his prey the tiger!

ALIX.

Yes, I love him!
And feel Heaven sent me to his aid. You see
To guardians left while yet a little child,
Bereft of parents, friendless and uncared for,
None heeded me, and so my tutors were

The fields and skies alone; and in the depths
Of solitudes I passed my life in dreams.
'T was thus that God prepared, far from the light,
My soul to hail a love unlike the common.
Do you, who love me also, and whom God
Has sent to aid me, listen to my words.
The road that leads from Montdidier to Roye
Lies near a manor where I was last year.
One evening, as I looked across the plain,
I saw a prisoner and his guards approach.
The guards required possession of my prison.
As chatelaine all my keys are due my King,
My Suzerain, and I obeyed. At night
I dared to creep along a path of which
None knows, but me, the outlet, and I reached,
Curious and unobserved, that vaulted dungeon.
What I saw there I never shall forget.
The grated loop-hole was lit up outside.
The prisoner kept pacing up and down
Beneath the vault. Although you never saw him,
You doubtless know the horrible sight that met
My gaze. I marked four haggard faces in
The shadow; but none spoke. It was a tomb;
And I, with brow more pale than that of one
On whom the axe is falling, chilled with fear,
Gazed on this spectre, moving to and fro,
Guarded by executioners. How long
Did I continue there? I cannot say.
The morrow, at the dawn, captain and guards
All vanished like the phantom of a dream.
What need to tell you more? Since that same hour
My soul is as the soul of one possessed.
Be it for weal or woe, illusion, madness,
One thought absorbs it. Everywhere I go,
This captive follows, passing like a shadow

With outstretched arms, then fades into the night.
I will deliver him. Who is this victim?
'T is clear he 's young and can have done no wrong.
By what right do those executioners
Change life for him into a hideous dream?
What mystery is this? Ah, well! to be
Entirely frank, by dint of pitying him
I learned to love him. I found out he was
Removed to Pierrefonds. I desire to save him,
And save him surely shall! What you 're about
To say to me, I to myself have said
A hundred times. 'T is madness, ruin, frenzy.
I know nought of him, and I might select
Some fair young lord. Well, then, suppose all true, —
I love him; and my fixed resolve to free him
Is in me more than purpose, 't is a flame,
A fury, a volition that devours
My soul! O God! I see him always there!
I know not what name you may give to this;
For me, I feel 't is love!

COUNT JEAN.

Ah, what a sad
And wild illusion! poor young soul! Alas!
You never had the counsels of a mother.

ALIX.

How much he suffers! Ah, have pity on him!

COUNT JEAN.

You never saw his face.

ALIX.

Yes, in my dreams,

COUNT JEAN.

And in your dreams do other visions come?
Do you see, too, the scaffold and the Grève?
The awful judge, purveyor to the tomb,
And the death-sentence read by the torches' glare?

ALIX.

If I do not save him, I lose myself.
God wills it. I his cell shall open, or
My tomb.

COUNT JEAN.

Ah, move no further — 't is your death;
I know it well — in this insane adventure,
At once impossible and sinister!
By your dead parents, by their soul and yours,
By that mysterious tie that binds us both,
Me, old in years, and you, in youth's first bloom,
Alix, I pray, — and I forbid this thing!

ALIX.

A voice from heaven I hear that brings to me
A different mandate. Be you who you may,
I cannot slight it. You forbid in vain.
For — heed me well, my friend! — although my mother,
That angel fallen asleep before her hour,
Although the Marquis de Créqui, my father,
Should leave the tomb on purpose to prevent me,
God pardon me, I would not yield!

COUNT JEAN.

Well, go!
God knows alone whither your steps may lead.
For me my only task is now to follow,
To love you, aid you, and outlive you never!

ALIX.

To-morrow I'll expect you.

COUNT JEAN.

The hour?

ALIX.

At midnight.

COUNT JEAN.

The place?

ALIX.

Behind the arsenal.

COUNT JEAN.

I shall
Be there.

ALIX (*holding out her hand, which he takes and presses to his lips*).

'T is well. [*She goes away. He falls on his knees.*

COUNT JEAN.

O God! O merciful God! do Thou,
Hope of the sinking ship, protect this child
Whom fate is hurrying through the shades of night!

ACT II.

SCENE. — *A very gloomy chamber with ogive vault, paved with broad flagstones, hung with scarlet velvet fringed with gold, and furnished with large fauteuils with gilt arms and tapestried backs. The aspect of this room is at once sinister and magnificent. On the left, in a corner, an immense bed of red damask and tapestry covered with a rich lace counterpane, with posters and a canopy, the top of which is of wrought gold. On the right, in another corner, a lofty chimney-place with iron back, adorned with flower-de luces. This sheet is so large that it fills up the entire rear of the chimney. On the right, also, a table covered with a velvet cloth, and resting on a square carpet of Gobelins. On the table a Venetian mirror. Above the bed, a big ebony crucifix with an ivory Christ, not Jansenist, — that is to say, with arms held out.*

In a corner on the right, near the table, a part of the hangings has been torn and shows the naked wall, on which are seen some strange designs engraved in the stone. A big nail lies on the table.

No light enters the chamber except through a long, grated window in the back, which is reached by three stone steps. The ray of light which passes through this window has fallen on the pavement in a manner that shows clearly to the eye. The bay of the window gives an idea of the enormous thickness of the walls.

The rising of the curtain shows a strange kind of figure standing near the table. At first sight it is impossible to guess either the age or sex of this figure, which is covered with a long robe of violet velvet, the head being entirely set in a mask of black velvet that covers the hair as well as the face, and reaches down to the shoulders. A little iron padlock closes the mask behind. When the robe opens a little it displays a dress of dark satin and the contours of a young man. This prisoner appears plunged in deep and painful reverie.

Quite at the back, above the window, in a little dark gallery which begins at the spandrel of the vault and runs round the entire wall of the dungeon, communicating with the chamber by a gilded wooden ladder which rests against the hangings on the left, an old halberdier, with white hair and grey beard, is dimly seen. His face is crossed by a black band that covers an eye. This soldier, standing silent and motionless in the darkness like a statue, holds a long

pistol in his right hand and a naked sword in his left; his halberd, leaning against an angle in the ribs of the vault, glistens in the shadow.

Above the ladder, on the left, is an iron door, half seen under a rich portière.

SCENE I.

THE MASK; *at the back*, THE SOLDIER.

THE MASK (*raising his head despondently and speaking as if with an effort*).

For life! [*He turns his head as if to look around him.*
A tomb! And I 'm scarce sixteen!
[*He marches with heavy steps towards the back of the dungeon and appears to contemplate the light from the window projected on the pavement at his feet.*
How slowly creeps along that pallid ray!
[*He seems to count the flagstones and measure a certain distance with his eyes.*
Ah! the fifth flag 's far from it still. [*He listens.*]
No sound!
[*He returns to the front of the theatre with hasty steps, and exclaims in a despairing outburst:* —
In two dark dungeons, night and day, at once
To live! Ah, yes! these executioners —
With what design, O Lord! permit'st thou this? —
My body have in one locked up, my face
In this grim mask, — the ghastlier of the two.
[*He appears to examine himself in the Venetian glass placed on the table.*
At times a hideous phantom in this glass
Appals me when I pass, and runs to meet me.
It is myself! And when between the bars
I look, the peasant hurries by in fear.
[*He sits down and muses.*

My soul has not her freedom e'en in sleep.
Never in dreams hear I the voice of friend;
And when I quit my couch at morning, I
Am not a man who comes and goes and talks,
Bubbling with life and pride. I am a corpse,—
A corpse that thinks, but coffined, though alive.
'T is horrible! Erstwhile, when yet a child,
I had a garden where I went at dawn,
Saw birds and sunbeams, colours, butterflies
That gleamed like gold, and sported mid the flowers.
And now — [*He rises.*]
Oh, what a shameful martyrdom
I suffer. Are there tigers, then, that say
To one another, "We will take a child,—
A fair and innocent and feeble child,—
And shut him in a tomb thus masked. He shall
Grow up to manhood, feeling manhood's instincts
Ooze drop by drop, e'en through his prison walls,
And penetrate his being. He shall know,
Though in his granite tower immured, the thrills
The springtime sends to plant and tree and bird;
And from his far-off dungeon he shall view,
With pallid face, the bare-foot girls that pass
Across the plain. Cheating his listlessness
With charcoal scribblings on those ancient walls,
Or graving his vague fancies with a nail,
He shall wear out his soul in childish things!
The wrinkles that will line his brow will be
But barren furrows. Weeks and months and years
Will pass and blanch his hair, and turn his eyes
To hollow caverns. Slowly, step by step,
The man shall change and fade into a ghost,
Until some day he wakes with frightened eyes
That tell him, he who ne'er knew youth, is old!"
Alas! I am so now. My weary soul
Is faint. A child in fears, a grandsire grey

In thought, but never man. O God! O God!
Hast thou no pity!

[*He throws himself into the fauteuil, with head and arms flat on the table, as if plunged in despair. After a moment of silence he rises painfully, and again examines the ray of light which, during all this scene, is insensibly moving across the pavement.*

It has made thus far
Not half its passage.

[*He lets his head fall in his anguish, and appears to sink again into his reverie.*

Oh, my mother! How
I could have loved thee! I am stifling!

[*He goes to the window in the back, mounts the steps, and gazes on the county.*

God!
How white and joyous yonder smoke ascends
And melts into the heavens.

[*At the back of the dungeon from the top of the steps.*

What! does man
Collect his sheaves, the bee her honey gather,
The river hurry on, the cloud float by?
Does Nature sing and quiver in the woods?
Does all the earth on which we live become,
With sounds and harmonies, most musical,
And glow with beauty? And does nothing tell
The world and cry to men, "You 're happy, you
Are free"? Ah, well! within this dungeon, shut
By darksome bolts, bereft of the fresh air
And pleasant sunlight, envying to the hind
His smoky cot, a captive pines away;
A victim done to death by prison bars;
A nameless man no one hath ever seen, —
A mystery, a shadow, without eyes
For others, or the sunlight for himself!
A sad, dejected prisoner, who weeps

Without — oh, crown of all his woes — the power
To even dry his tears!

[*He returns to the front of the theatre.*

Oh, but to bathe,
In the air that trembles everywhere around,
My breast, my hair, my face, free for one day,
And then to die! But no! Thou hideous mask!

[*He tries to tear off the mask with both hands.*

Never to spread my wings out in the heavens,
Never to proudly float through azure skies —
I cannot burst thee, frightful chrysalis!
O rage!

[*He sits down, lets his head fall on the table, and is heard sobbing. After a few moments he lifts his head.*

And yet that angel! Let me not
Blaspheme! The hour draws near.

[*He again examines the distance traversed by the ray.*

The ray will soon
O'ertake the mark I placed on the fifth flag.
[*Returning.*] Her coming lulls to sleep my anguished soul,
And in my heart there is a boundless love.

[*Notes of a lute are heard, apparently coming from a neighbouring chamber.*

'T is she! I hear her! [*He falls on his knees.*]
Blessed be Thou, O Lord!

[*Deep silence. A voice rises in the same place as the lute, and seems to accompany it. The prisoner listens on his knees, in an attitude of prayer and ecstasy.*

THE VOICE.

With songs the heavens are filling;
God's shadow round thee set!
Yield not to sorrow chilling!
Thy soul holds visions thrilling
Thy heart shall perfect yet!

The shadow sweets discloses
To the poor soul afire ;
God the same hour disposes
Bright stars and dewy roses
To sate the heart's desire !

The night from lakelets sombre,
From hills that sleeping lie,
Hears voices without number.
They 're songs, in time of slumber,
The shadow sends the sky.

Yearn not for sunlight streaming
Thy pallid brow above.
The dawn is near day's beaming,
The night doth hold morn's gleaming,
The shadow holdeth love !

THE MASK (*on his knees, turned towards the chimney from which the song appears to come*).

Oh, come !

[*The back of the chimney turns slowly on itself like a door. A ray of light appears through this opening, on which* THE MASK, *fascinated, fixes his gaze, saying in a low voice.*

Come now !

SCENE II.

THE MASK ; ALIX, *at the back, in the chimney ;* THE JAILER ; *above, in the gallery,* THE SOLDIER. ALIX, *from where she is standing, gazes on the prisoner with eyes full of love and compassion.*

THE MASK.

How beautiful she is !
Oh, what were life and light and joy with her !

[*Clasping his hands.*] Ah, lovely being, maid, enchanting vision!
Let me adore thee; for, as from a star
That lights up all the heavens, rays divine
Dart from thy luminous eyes and daze my soul!
While gazing on thee I see plainly God!
The head thou riskest in this sinister place
Is to my eyes with wondrous halos crowned; —
For thou must be an angel, and of all
God's angels best and sweetest, who dost come
Day after day into this hideous tomb;
Whose gracious presence in these gloomy walls
Makes a poor veiled and shackled captive thrill
With such deep love in spite of such deep hate!
Since first thou camest, it is now a month;
And, as thou see'st, each succeeding day
But brings an added rapture with it!

ALIX (*advancing towards him*).

Friend!

THE MASK (*without rising*).

Come hither now, O fair and stainless brow,
And let me gaze upon thee, kneeling thus!
This above all, swear thou wilt come to-morrow.
Thy hand! Ah, could I only kiss that hand!
Adorable hand, so pretty and so pure!
[*He presses the hand of* ALIX *to his breast.*
And yet I swear that God has placed behind
This mask a mouth, behind this shroud a heart.
[*He rises.*
I needs must frighten thee, is it not so?
Just now I was alone, and watched the hour
When God doth send thee hither; and I cursed —
Forgive, O Lord! — that God who sends such joy!

Methought — you see I counted every moment —
The sunbeam took more than its usual time
To win to yonder flag. Then this black mask —
This vault of hell! He would have called me mad
Who saw me then! My mind was wandering —
I know not where — in quest of gardens, fancies,
Of tinted fields all filled with fluttering swarms
Whose wings I envied. Weeping I gave ear,
In hopes to catch thy steps; and now I smile!
Thou canst not see it! Ah, how fair thou art!
How charming! Madame [*He conducts her to the fauteuil.*],
Pray sit there, and we
Will talk. If thou wert near me all the day,
E'en in my gloomy tower, all the day
That tower would echo laughter. O my love!
In truth, I wearied for a sight of thee!

ALIX.

O misery! Each time I enter here
My heart is tortured, poor unhappy youth!

THE MASK.

No, speak not thus. A truce to mournful words;
For blest be thou! I see thee, and am happy.
To see thee! does not that suffice? I dread
Whate'er might scare away the joy that sings
Within my soul when listening to thy voice,
Like to a bird that 's startled by a sound!

ALIX.

Would I might see your face!

THE MASK (*taking her hand*).

Thy hand! I crave it.

ALIX (*perceiving that* THE SOLDIER *posted in the gallery is moving, runs to* THE JAILER, *who has remained on guard in the chimney, and anxiously points to* THE SOLDIER).

That man?

THE JAILER (*interrupting her, in a low voice*).

Is with us, madame, and your friend.

THE MASK (*leading* ALIX *back and making her sit down*).

I know not why you should run from me thus.
I love you, and would see your face. Stay there.

ALIX.

But yet we must consider serious things.
The time has come to do so. Pray attend.
My visits, long mysterious, to this place
Have had a purpose.

THE MASK.

And that purpose is —

ALIX.

To rescue you.

THE MASK.

Oh, heaven!

ALIX.

And I have
The means.

THE MASK (*falling on his knees*).

O God! then Thou hast heard my prayers!
Freedom and love! — completeness of the soul!
Two rays of light which, hidden from the damned,
Make perfect day throughout Thy paradise! [*He rises.*]
Free! free! Oh, heaven! how dazzling is the thought!
[*To* ALIX.] But how can you accomplish this? The tower

Is guarded well! No matter! Tell me not
That this is so. I will believe you, for
All 's possible to angels of your kind!
Will it be soon?

ALIX.

I hope so. Yes, perhaps —

[*She goes to* THE JAILER *and speaks to him in a low tone.*

When will the attempt be made?

THE JAILER (*in a low voice*).

Not yet.

ALIX (*in the same tone*).

But when?

THE JAILER (*in the same tone*).

The court is at Compiègne. We might lose all.
It 's not the time for such a stroke as this,
But later on.

ALIX.

You 'll aid me?

THE JAILER (*aside, after protesting his fidelity to* ALIX *by a gesture*).

Yes, of course!
Not such a dolt! The lady gives each day
Ten louis for each interview; and so
I do not care how long this lasts. He were
A fool, indeed, who killed the hen that laid
Such golden eggs!

ALIX (*to* THE MASK).

You are mistaken if
You think that I am daughter to that man.
I 'm nobly born, a Créqui, and my name
Is Jeanne Alix de Ponthieu. The Rohans,

The Guises, Chateaupers, are of my kin;
Peers, dukes, among my ancestors I count,
Marshals and admirals and constables.

THE MASK (*as if speaking to himself*).

Mine, too, are great.

ALIX (*joyfully*).

So much the better!

THE MASK.

Ah!

ALIX.

But — now I think of it — you spoke some words
About your ancestors —

THE MASK (*as if awaking from his reverie*).

What! I? Oh, no!

ALIX.

You always told me you knew not your name.

THE MASK.

I know it not, in truth.

ALIX.

Do not deceive me!

THE MASK.

My angel!

ALIX.

For I long to learn —

THE MASK (*interrupting her*).

No! no!
Hell wreaks its vengeance on me. Ask no more.
My crime was perpetrated on the day

That saw my birth, and so I was condemned!
Ask me no more! My house is fraught with portents!
I feel, while speaking of it e'en to you,
That I am pale!

ALIX.

This secret —

THE MASK.

Is so grave
That it would crush you!

ALIX.

Let us share it then!

THE MASK.

Never! Such burdens are not placed on those
We love.

ALIX.

Though this vault fall on me, yet I
Will know your name!

THE MASK (*rising in a fit of passionate emotion*).

Give heed! I will not tell it.
That name you 'll never know! For uttering it
A good old servant died; and yet he did
But whisper in my ear. The martyrdom
I suffer has its source in that alone
Which I heard spoken! Would this secret had
To me been ne'er revealed! A humble child,
I lived 'neath starlit skies. I had no name,
But Nature was my own; and freedom, sunlight,
Fresh fields, and blooming swards I held in fee.
And in my eyes was God, and on my brow
And in my heart. But soon as this fell secret
Was shed like poisonous liquid on my soul,
It held but darkness; and my sadness showed
I knew my name! One evening, as I lay

Upon my couch, a band of men rushed in.
I rose, and in my naked feet I ran
Into another room, where I became
Unconscious. When I woke I scarce recalled
What had occurred; but on my face I felt
A something that disturbed me. Then, at once,
As I passed near a glass, I shrank in horror.
There I had seen myself! And since that day
In darkness do I dwell. And since that day
With piteous cries, I make appeal to God
To give me back again the vanished light!
[*Wildly.*] Am I a man? And have I a man's name?
There 's no one can say yes to this but I,
And I say no! [*To* ALIX.] Nay, you who come within
This dwelling-place of mine, are you even sure
That that which meets your eyes this very hour
Is aught else but a shadow and a vision?
Why speak to me of flight? Ah, ye who live!
Let the dead slumber in their gloomy realm!
This mask, — it is my face and I 'm a phantom
Oh! I am dying! Air!

[*He falls fainting into the fauteuil.*

ALIX (*supporting him with her arms*).

That awful mask
Is stifling him.
[*To* THE JAILER.] Ah, have some mercy on
This poor unhappy captive!
[*Pointing to the padlock.*] Open it!

THE JAILER.

Madame, it 's certain death!

ALIX.

For taking off
This mask but for a moment?

THE JAILER.

Yes.

ALIX.

'T is shameful

THE JAILER.

And, then, this is the time the governor
In this part of the castle makes his rounds.

ALIX (*searching in the pocket of her skirt*).

Good God! how lucky 't is I have my purse!
[*She draws out a purse which she hands to* THE JAILER.
In this are twenty louis. They are yours,
If for an instant he but breathe at ease!

THE JAILER (*taking the purse after some hesitation*).

So be it!

[*He takes a little key from a bunch and prepares to use it.*

ALIX (*leaning over the prisoner, who is in a faint*).

Ah, this mask bears harder far
On me than him. But I shall see him then!
Shall free him for a time!

[*For some moments* THE SOLDIER, *posted in the gallery, has appeared to observe the scene that is passing below him with more attention. At the moment when* THE JAILER *puts the key in the little lock of the mask, and while* ALIX, *full of joy and anxiety, supports the head of the prisoner with her hands,* THE SOLDIER *suddenly leans over the baluster of the gallery, and fires a pistol at the prisoner, breaking the glass on the table near him. At the report of the pistol all turn round frightened, and the opening of the iron door of the dungeon is heard.*

THE JAILER (*turning towards* THE SOLDIER).

Ah, treacherous knave!

[*The door opens. Enters* M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN, *Governor of the castle of Pierrefonds, attended by Turnkeys and Soldiers.*

SCENE III.

The same. M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN. *Soldiers, Turnkeys.*

THE SOLDIER (*shouting from the gallery*).

Help! help! Be on your guard! Let some one search
The jailer!

[*At a sign from the Governor, the Soldiers surround and search* THE JAILER.

ALIX (*aside*).

Heavens!

THE SOLDIER (*continuing*).

His pocket holds, you 'll find,
A purse of twenty louis — count! — which he
Received before my eyes from yonder lady,
As recompense, if he 'd unmask the man.
I had my orders, and I fired.

[*The Soldiers have found the purse.*

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS (*after counting*).

The sum
Is twenty louis!

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

What! a woman here?
What means —

THE JAILER (*thunderstruck, in a low tone to* ALIX).

A man of yours! And these are they
You trust!

THE SOLDIER (*to the Governor, pointing to* ALIX).

I let her enter. To fulfil
My duty, I decided to hear all,
So that I might inform myself of all.
[*Pointing to the prisoner.*] But when I saw they would unmask his face,
I thought it time to stop.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

You acted wisely.
[*He hastily locks the padlock of the mask and puts the key in his pocket. Then he turns to the Soldiers, who surround* THE JAILER.
Away with him to prison: let her stay.
We wish to question her.

THE SOLDIER (*to the Governor*).

May I, my lord,
A few words speak in private?
[*He descends from the gallery. The Soldiers lead away* THE JAILER.

THE JAILER (*menacing him with his fist.*)

Traitor!
[THE JAILER *and his guards go out.* M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *dismisses the other Turnkeys by a sign and turns to* THE SOLDIER, *who has taken a position near him in front of the stage.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well?

THE SOLDIER (*pointing to the iron bars of the casement*).

Approach, my lord, that window.

[M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *goes towards the casement and ascends the steps leading to it.*

Shake the bars
Across the centre.

[M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *does as directed. The bars pointed out by* THE SOLDIER *are easily unfastened by the effort and leave a wide open space.*

What say you to that?

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*examining the bars, which appear to have been sawn with care, and then dexterously fitted into their places*).

Without you —

THE SOLDIER (*going to the window*).

Bid that soldier to come up
Whose gleaming halberd you must notice, — there,
Beneath the tower.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*looking out*).

'T is the man on guard.

THE SOLDIER.

Under this casement. Yes.

[M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *opens the door of the dungeon a little and gives an order in a low voice to the Turnkeys who are stationed outside. He then walks back towards* THE SOLDIER, *who has again returned to the front of the stage.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

My brave companion!
The King's your debtor. Tell me, do you know
The woman's name?

THE SOLDIER.

No.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

'T is a plot!

THE SOLDIER.

I think so.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

I shall take care that you 're well paid for this,
And well rewarded.

THE SOLDIER.

Ah, here comes the soldier.

Enter TAGUS, *in the midst of the Turnkeys, in the dress of a soldier with a haversack on his back.*

SCENE IV.

The same. TAGUS.

THE SOLDIER (*to* FERTÉ-IRLAN).

With your good leave, my lord.
[*To* TAGUS.] Come here, you knave!
[TAGUS *approaches, at the same time casting a look of the deepest astonishment at* THE SOLDIER.
Let him be searched, my lord, before you, now.
At once, and without mercy. He has hid
A ladder of rope within his haversack.

TAGUS (*whose astonishment increases more and more*).

Well, this is, I should think, a puzzle!

[*The haversack of* TAGUS *is searched and a ladder of rope is found in it, supplied with the necessary cramps.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Yes!

THE SOLDIER (*unfolding the ladder, to* M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN).

Please test it for a moment and you 'll find
It is an accurate measure of the height
Between the casement and the ground.

TAGUS.

It 's all
A puzzle more and more!

THE SOLDIER (*to the Jailers, after turning towards* TAGUS).

But lest perchance
He might break loose, bind fast that rascal there.

[*Until now* THE MASK *has appeared to be stricken with stupor; he turns and lets his eyes wander around.*

THE MASK (*as if in a dream*).

Great God! What is the purport of all this?

[*The Jailers tie the arms of* TAGUS *behind his back.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*pointing to* TAGUS).

To the dungeon!

THE SOLDIER.

No, my lord; let him stay here.
[*To* TAGUS.] You shall be hanged, you rogue, within an hour.

TAGUS.

Oh, very well! I 'm puzzled more than ever.

[*At a sign from the Governor, the Jailers place* TAGUS *in a corner. The latter continues to watch the scene anxiously.* ALIX *is paralysed, and* THE MASK *seems turned to stone.*

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*taking* THE SOLDIER *aside and speaking in a low voice*).

It 's clear, my friend, there is a plot to set
The prisoner free.

THE SOLDIER (*in the same tone*).

The garrison entire
Is in it to a man. His Eminence,
Apprised on yesterday of this great peril,
Has sent me hither. 'T is a danger which
Admits of no delay.
[*He takes a folded paper from his pocket which he hands to the Governor.*
Read !

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*reading*).

"You may trust
The bearer of the present.— *Mazarin.*"
It is enough. What action should I take ?
But speak yourself. Give orders in my name.

ALIX (*aside, raising her eyes to heaven*).

O God ! show mercy to us !

THE SOLDIER (*in a loud voice to the Turnkeys*).

By the King's
Command, and for a reason to him known,
Let all the soldiers of the garrison
Return within the castle. Let the keep
Be shut, and no one dare to leave outside
A single guard. Have the portcullis lowered
And raise the bridge. Bring us the keys. Your heads
Shall answer for it.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*to the Turnkeys*).

Have you heard? Then go!

[*The Turnkeys leave.*

THE SOLDIER (*to* FERTÉ-IRLAN).

The garrison is numerous and armed;
It must be carefully secured. This night
It might attempt some sudden, bold surprise
And bear the prisoner off by force. To-morrow
We shall have reinforcements.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

You are sure?

THE SOLDIER.

His Eminence has sent some thirty archers
Belonging to his body-guard. At dawn
You 'll see them here. Meanwhile, we two must watch
The tower alone. There 's many a hidden trap
Which we have reason to be wary of.
Nay, we perhaps may have to stand a siege.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

True. Comrade, let us barricade ourselves
Right here.

THE SOLDIER (*pointing to the iron door*).

That door is solid?

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well, a cannon
Might burst it open, but nought else.

ALIX (*aside*).

Alas!
There is no longer hope.

[*The Turnkeys enter again with lanterns. Night has fallen during the scene.*

A TURNKEY (*presenting a bunch of keys to the Governor*).

Each door is locked.
Here are the keys.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*taking the bunch which he attaches to his belt.*)

See none get out.

TURNKEY.

They 're all
Secured.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*in a low voice*).

What do you purpose afterwards?
Ought we to keep these fellows here?

THE SOLDIER.

Oh, no!
I doubt if they be trusty. Now we shall
Examine, if you please, this knave. [*He points to* TAGUS.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*to the Turnkeys*).

Depart!

[*The Turnkeys obey. The Governor goes to the iron door, shuts and bolts it himself, and then returns to* THE SOLDIER.

So now we are sole tenants of the prison.
None can come near us; and we 're safe, so far.

THE SOLDIER (*pointing to the back of the chimney which has remained open since the entrance of* ALIX).

Ah, pardon me! There is a path by which
We might be reached.

FERTÉ-IRLAN (*going to the chimney*).

Why, yes, indeed, you 're right.
The one through which this lady found her way.
Come, let us close it.

THE SOLDIER (*stopping him*).

No. That sheet 's so thick
That none can move it except him who knows
The secret spring, of which the jailer is
Alone aware. And yet the rebels might
Find easy entrance.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Whither does it lead?

THE SOLDIER (*looking*).

Into a darkened room that neither has
A cornice nor a window; and I see
Through the dim shadow that its door 's ajar.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well, close it then.

[THE SOLDIER *obeys, and disappears through the half-open sheet. A rattling of locks and keys is heard in the cellar, to which the opening really leads. Then* THE SOLDIER *reappears with two keys in his hand.*

THE SOLDIER (*to the Governor*).

The keys were in the locks.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

The bolts?

THE SOLDIER (*making a gesture of driving in a bolt*).

Are shot.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

I fear there is some trap,
Some stratagem. You 're sure that all is locked?

THE SOLDIER.

Yes. You can see yourself.

FERTÉ-IRLAN.

Well, let us see.

[*He enters the dark cellar through the small opening.*

ALIX (*aside.*)

All 's lost!

[THE SOLDIER *has been walking all the time behind the Governor, following him very closely. The very moment* M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN *disappears in the neighbouring cellar,* THE SOLDIER *draws quickly the metal sheet at the back of the chimney, which closes noiselessly. Then throwing off his white wig and black band he turns to* ALIX, TAGUS, *and* THE MASK, *who are astounded. It is* COUNT JEAN.

COUNT JEAN.

All 's won. 'T is I! The jailer was
A faithless knave and cheated you.
[*To* THE MASK.] Last night
You slept near him, [*Pointing to* TAGUS.], my trusty servitor.
The bars are sawn, the ladder is prepared,
And all is ready. Under lock and key,
The garrison; and under lock and key,
The governor. The jailer is in chains,
[*To* THE MASK.] And you are free. Let us leave here at once.

[*An outburst of joy.* ALIX *runs to* COUNT JEAN *and takes his hand, which she presses to her heart.*

THE MASK (*with effusion to* COUNT JEAN).

May God repay you!

TAGUS.

Ah, the puzzle 's plain!

ALIX.

Oh, thanks!

COUNT JEAN.

My joy is quite as great as yours.

ALIX.

Dear friend!

COUNT JEAN.

But let us make all haste. Time flies!

[*He cuts with his dagger the cords that bind* TAGUS, *then picks up the ladder of rope which is lying on the floor.*

I 'll tie the ladder to the casement bars!

[*He runs and fastens the ladder of rope to the bars of the casement, making it hang on the outside.*

TAGUS (*lifting from the table the keys of the dungeon in which the Governor has been imprisoned.*)

I 'll send the keys a-whirling to the moat!

[*He flings the keys through the window.*

THE MASK (*to* COUNT JEAN).

Quick! quick! Pull off this mask!

COUNT JEAN.

Ah! let me beg
That first we leave this place. The night is dark,
We have a two hours' journey through the woods.
I will not take it off you until we reach
Plessis-les-Rois. Above all things we must

Secure our safety first. We must away
From here!
[*To* TAGUS *who is busily engaged in making the ladder firm.*] Where are the garments?

TAGUS.

They 're below.

COUNT JEAN.

Where?

TAGUS.

In a thicket.

COUNT JEAN.

Well, make haste.
[*The Governor is heard knocking violently on the back of the chimney.*
Yes, knock!

ALIX (*with her eyes fixed in joy on* THE MASK).

O rapture! he is free!

COUNT JEAN (*takes a notebook from his pocket and a pencil, then writes on his knee*).

"Within this room
You 'll find the Governor."
[*When he has finished he tears out the leaf and fixes it on the back of the chimney to one of the tenter-hooks riveted in the cast-iron. Then he goes to the window and examines the ladder.*
[*To* TAGUS.] You 're sure it 's firm?

TAGUS.

Oh, yes! quite firm.

THE MASK (*to* COUNT JEAN).

The name by which you 're known?

COUNT JEAN.

You 'll learn it later.

[*The Governor continues knocking on the iron sheet.*

Knock away, good man!

[*He makes a sign to them all to proceed to the window.*

[*To* TAGUS.] You first.

[*Pointing to* ALIX.] She after.

[*To* THE MASK.] Then your turn. I last.

[TAGUS *takes a stride across the window, places his foot on the ladder and is seen descending. Then he disappears.* ALIX *takes her turn after, assisted by* COUNT JEAN.

God guard Alix!

ALIX (*descending and half lost to sight behind the window*).

May God the prisoner save!

[THE MASK *next descends the ladder, and at the moment* COUNT JEAN *places his foot on it, the curtain falls.*

ACT III.

SCENE. — *A magnificent and dilapidated apartment with rich hangings falling into tatters. Architecture of the time of Henry IV. Old, high-backed chairs, the gilding of which is coming off; immense cobwebs on the painted and carved beams of the ceiling; two large portraits covered with dust,— one of Louis XIII., the other of Cardinal Richlieu, — gazing on each other, both full length. The hangings are blue, sprinkled with H's and flower-de-luces intermingled with the armourial bearings of the house of Créqui. At the back, a large door surmounted by the wild plum-tree of the Créquis, under a ducal crown. On the right, in a corner, a folding door. In an angle at the back, opposite this, a sideboard. On the left, a window, and near it an old screen; on the right a table and arm-chair. The apartment has the damp and melancholy appearance of a place that has been uninhabited for many years.*

At the rising of the curtain, the QUEEN-MOTHER, KING LOUIS XIV., *and* CARDINAL MAZARIN *are on the scene. The* QUEEN *in black, with jet bands: the* CARDINAL *in soutane, biretta, and red stockings, but without the cape belonging to his rank. He wears the blue ribbon of the order of the Holy Ghost on his neck. The* KING, *quite young, in black dress, over which he wears a magnificent gold brocade; blue ribbon, hat with white plumes, sword with diamond hilt, lace collar and ruffles.*

The KING *is a very handsome youth, with small moustaches. The* CARDINAL, *pallid, coughing, and broken by disease, looks like an old man, although in reality he is not yet sixty.*

Two candelabra are on the table.

SCENE I.

[THE QUEEN-MOTHER, THE KING, CARDINAL MAZARIN. THE QUEEN *is standing beside the table, on which she presses her bent fore-finger.* THE CARDINAL *behind her, in an attitude of respect. The eyes of* THE KING *wander round the apartment He is almost astounded at its dilapidated condition.*

THE KING.

So, madame, this is named Plessis-les-Rois ?

[*He examines the dusty chairs.*

It looks to me as if it must have been
Without a tenant for a hundred years.

[*Turning back to* THE QUEEN.

Your Majesty, if you desire to speak
I am prepared to hear. The presence of
The Cardinal is, doubtless, no restraint.

[THE QUEEN *approves by a sign of the head.*

As I at least conceive, you bring us here,
To this abandoned house, so that we may
Confer unwitnessed. Let it be so, though
'T were easy to have chosen a better place;
But I will not complain of place or time,
Nor that we had to reach this charming spot
By a long passage underground that was
Exceeding tiresome and exceeding cold.
I listen, madame, with the reverence
Befits a son obedient.

THE QUEEN.

Sire, in truth
I have to speak to you of many things.
And first, the London and the Paris treaty,
Meant to be secret, has been brought to light,
And shocks the minds of men. The Emperor
Is struck with wonder, and the Catholic King
Regards it as most baneful. I, you see,
Am plain. The Genoese make you their dupe,
And Tunis corsairs devastate Provence,
Yet go unpunished. Kings should be beloved
At home, and feared abroad. Pray, do not fret
About returning to Compiègne to-night.

[*She points to the door on the right*

There is a room adjoining which I had
Made ready for your Majesty. And now
I will resume. We are in need of money,
And brought to want by ruinous festivals.
The Cardinal de Richelieu cut off heads,
But, as became a statesman of his grandeur,
With fearless mien and in the light of day.
[*Pointing to* MAZARIN.
This Cardinal kills and skulks. And I do know
Of many a pavement blood-stained in the dark,
And in the darkness cleansed. The Pope is old;
And, should the conclave meet, we have no funds
Wherewith to influence the cardinals.
The English or the Huguenots get all.
Oh, what a shame! — But I will curb my wrath.
The Dauphin regiment is malcontent
Because a gallows-bird, a very knave,
A sharper —
[*Pointing to* MAZARIN.
But a kinsman of my lord, —
Is made its colonel. And, three days ago,
They marched — such bitterness is in their souls —
With lowered pikes to the ramparts of the Louvre.
All Paris was alarmed. But oh, no matter!
You 're in Compiègne It boots you not to know. —
I will speak out. There is a smouldering fire
Throughout the provinces. The princes' claims
Meet with no just concession, and the peace
Made with them is but hollow. There will be,
I fear, a rupture soon. The dukes feel outraged,
The parliament 's disgusted. Even me
An iron hand weighs down. Against my will
My servant, Boisthibaut, has been turned off,
The price of bread is raised; and, in a word,
All things go wrong, and nothing great is willed,

And nothing wise is done. Your enemies
Are all abetted, and the State 's destroyed.
These truths are plain. Ask the first president!

THE CARDINAL (*in a low tone to* THE KING, *with a scarcely perceptible shrug of the shoulders*).

Mathieu Molé!

THE QUEEN.

You think my words too strong:
Consult D'Estrée or Madame de Targis,
An upright woman, and in high esteem
With the late king, my lord. De Thou, alone
Untainted in these trying times! Souvré!
Ledeau, the councillor!

THE CARDINAL (*to* THE KING, *in a low voice*).

All imbeciles!

THE QUEEN (*to* THE CARDINAL).

What means this whispering? What calumnious hints?

THE CARDINAL (*with a profound bow to* THE QUEEN).

I merely said that these are honest people.

THE QUEEN (*pointing to* MAZARIN).

And yet each day he trenches on your rights!
And yet France is disturbed and Europe anxious!
And yet De Retz, sire, is an able man!
And yet see what men say, see what they write!
De Beaufort —

THE CARDINAL.

Retz and Beaufort! rebels both.

THE QUEEN (*to* THE KING).

Read Maynard, Coffier, Guy-Joli —

THE CARDINAL.

Lampoons!

THE QUEEN.

For God's sake, sir, be still! A truce to speeches!
You talk so much that one can't say a word!

THE CARDINAL (*bowing to the ground*).

Speak.

THE QUEEN (*violently*).

No! I 'm silent now!

THE CARDINAL.

Sire, may I make
Reply?

THE KING.

Yes, do.

THE CARDINAL.

With London there 's no treaty.
Genoa? We 've received three millions from her.
Tunis? This very hour, along our coasts,
A hundred pirates hanged swing in the air.
The parliaments? They 're seats of lawless hopes!
I guard their rights; their edicts do not count.
As for the claims made by the dukes and princes,
I 'm willing that we should discuss them all.
We 'll see how nice they are. Nevers demands
The salt excises of the Rethelais.
Beaufort desires to levy regiments
With perfect freedom, sire, throughout your realm;
He leads even now a corps of infantry
To Nantes, with waving flags and sounding trumpets.
Elbeuf would have a duchy and a seat
In Parliament bestowed upon his bastard.
The Count de Soissons, whom your power offends,

Insists that you shall give to him the right
To issue patents of nobility.
Upon Thouars, Rohan has placed your flag,
But underneath his own. Bouillon requires
Sedan to be restored, and that the King
Reduce Turenne to mere liege-homage. Nay,
He urges also that the Huguenots
Shall have the right to meet. The Duke d'Orleans
Is modest to excess. He only asks,
As guerdon for the civil wars he caused,
Your pardon, with two or three towns thrown in.
D'Epernon needs Poitiers, and D'Aiguillon
Nogent; Vendome is eager to outrank
The other nobles; Conti to have gold.
The tree entire is eaten up with greed, —
The younger branches gluttonous as any.
Mercœur says to the King: "Pay off my debts."
Chabot by heaping up his valiant feats,
Regains his captainry of Blois' old castle.
In fine, to sum all up and reach an end,
The Chancellor would have his wages doubled.
And if that worthy Duke d'Augen obtain
The truncheon of a marshal for his son,
The ribbon for his brother, he will seek
No other perquisites. Such are the facts.

[THE KING *turns gravely to* THE QUEEN

THE QUEEN (*to* THE CARDINAL).

By heaven, sir, you triumph with much ease!
Dukes, princes, people; Paris, Genoa, Tunis,
Rome which you leave to chance, and London which
Grows bolder every day. All you may say,
Like all that I have said, imports but little.
But ah, my soul is racked! This I proclaim
Before the world! 'T is a monstrous thing!
A low-born, common girl — your niece, forsooth! —

Should dare cast eyes upon my King of France!
A girl whose grandsire was some sorry clerk
Bred in Palermo, if I've heard aright.
To forty emperors and sixty kings
That man has dealt a buffet on the cheek!
Must Bourbon, Austria, be dragged through mud?
Must I be crushed except I say a yes?
Must this unheard-of, hateful thing take place?
Must you, sire, take a Mancini for wife?
No! no! because I will not have it! No!
Because 't is loathesome!

THE KING (*wounded*).

Madame —

THE QUEEN (*half-turned towards* MAZARIN).

God!
That man! Oh, heavens! what woes I have endured!
For his ambition he would go to hell!
And now the viper's crawling up the path
Leads to the eagle's nest! O Jesus Christ!
How often I have spent whole nights alone,
Upon my balcony, at Saint-Germain,
My head between my hands, and all my soul
Absorbed in thinking what a shame this was!

THE KING.

Madame —

THE QUEEN.

Oh, scenes like this must be deplored!
But ah, have confidence in me, dear son!
Such marriages as this end always ill!

THE CARDINAL (*with a low bow*).

I know what 's due the Queen, and hold my peace.
Yet though my niece be sprung from no mean line,

And though her blood derives — when all is said —
Some reflex splendour from the Roman purple,
I tell my generous King, as does the Queen,
Such marriages as this end — sometimes — ill.
Still, for all that, they happen now and then, —
When decency requires.

[*He turns and bows profoundly to* THE QUEEN.

Her majesty
Knows this right well.

THE QUEEN.

You lie, Lord Cardinal!
Your pardon, sire; he drives me to extremes.
I am both right and wrong, — that 's all the tale.
Great God! I 'd rather have Richelieu! None dared
To slight me when your father lived. This man
Has made me mad! I am a simple woman,
Unlearned in State affairs.

[*To* MAZARIN.] As you know well.

[*To* THE KING.] But I am queen, a queen whom all neglect;
But I am mother, — oh, the bitter pain! —
A mother, and they rob me of my son!

[*She breaks off. Her voice grows weak, owing to her effort to keep back her tears.*

My son, you will not wed this nameless girl,
Whose eyes show she 's in love with D' Epernon!
'T is true.

[*She sit down, draws* THE KING *near her and throws her arms about him.*

Come here.

[*Pointing to* MAZARIN.] His is an evil soul.
You have too good a heart. But call to mind
His malice when you were a little boy!
Do you remember how that sordid man,
So wayward, and resentful of a word,

In mid December left you, without sheets
Upon your bed, or fire within your room.
Oh, I have been most keenly blamed for that!
One day that you were going to Conflans,
The carriage that he gave you was so old,
The very rabble in the streets cried shame.
Because he wished to reign and not be held
To answer for his deeds, he ordered, sire,
That you should not be taught the things that might
Enlarge your mind. Nay, even history
Was interdicted. Paris he oppressed
In an inglorious war, — a civil war;
A ruthless and a most ungodly war, —
From which you had to fly, poor frightened child!
Your people suffered, whom he robs and starves!
You must remember that unhappy woman
Who on the Melun bridge of hunger died.
He set himself up as a prince and duke,
To neither title having any claim.
The money you received from La Vieuville,
He stripped you of in a most shabby style.
You could not rest at night whene'er you felt
That he was near you. Then, his retinue —
So madly did his vanity break out —
Was quite as grand and numerous as yours,
As if he were your equal. Such a clang
Of swords attended him on his return —
Do you recall it? — that the insolent din
Would make you start up, trembling in the dark,
Out of your sleep. Yes, you, the King, his king!
Your house's head! And all you said was this:
"There 's quite a noise whenever he goes by!"

[*She embraces* THE KING, *who seems to endure her caresses rather impatiently. His eyes are all the time fixed on* THE CARDINAL, *as if he wished to derive advice and inspiration from him.*

At last you 're king! And, sire, you should reflect
In France a foreign yoke is little liked.
He is Italian.

THE KING.

And a Spaniard you.

THE QUEEN (*raising her head and wiping away a tear*).

I pardon you that brutal word, my child,
By your mouth uttered, by his heart conceived.
[*She casts an indignant look at* MAZARIN.
He 's there, that devil with his mocking smile!
[*She lets her head fall on her hands and weeps.*
Oh!

[THE CARDINAL *while playing with a big repeater, which he carries under his soutane, makes it strike the hour, as if inadvertently.*

THE KING (*to* THE QUEEN, *coldly*).

Madame, it grows late.

THE QUEEN.

'T is true; your room
Is ready! Let us enter. Come! Rest sure
Your welcome will be warm. My women, sire,
Shall serve you. [*Turning to* THE CARDINAL.] 'T is my right.
[*Drawing* THE KING *to her knees.*] My darling Louis!
You know how formerly —

THE KING.

I must return
To Compiègne, for the hour of midnight strikes.
Villequier will answer for me, and,
Madame, with deep respect I take my leave.
[*To* MAZARIN.] Come, sir.

THE QUEEN (*who has her eyes fixed on the ground, and never looks at* THE KING).

Alas!

[MAZARIN *approaches the table and takes one of the candelabra. He bends, at the same time, towards the ear of* THE QUEEN.

THE CARDINAL (*in a low tone to* THE QUEEN).

When free we can explain
Our misconceptions. I 'll return at once.

[THE KING *kisses the hand of* THE QUEEN, *bows profoundly, and leaves, preceded by* THE CARDINAL, *who bears the candelabrum in front of him.*

SCENE II.

THE QUEEN *alone; then* DAME CLAUDE.

THE QUEEN.

May I be with the dead, before I wait
For thee, thou wretch! The traitor! He would snap
His fingers in my face. In sooth!

[*She rings. One of her women,* DAME CLAUDE, *appears at the door of the corner on the right.*

My bed?

DAME CLAUDE (*pointing to the room she is coming out of*).

Is ready, madame, there.

THE QUEEN (*musing in front of the stage*).

The King 's no more
My son. The court to Mazarin belongs.
If that man placed his foot upon my breast

My son would laugh! My friends are kept away
[*Silent and in deep thought.*
If Monsieur [1] only were but two years older!
[*More thoughtfully still.*
Or rather — if — [*Raising her head.*] Oh, these are horrible thoughts!

[*She enters the neighbouring chamber, preceded by* DAME CLAUDE, *who has taken from the table the candelabrum that remained.*

A moment of silence. The apartment becomes again gloomy and deserted. Suddenly, in the corner on the left, a panel in the wainscot, in no respect different from the others in appearance, turns on itself and shows an entrance which it masked. This entrance appears to open on a little spiral staircase. A man is seen ascending it, in a dress of sombre colour, wrapped in a mantle, with a dark lantern in his hand. It is COUNT JEAN. *He enters, leaving the panel behind him open.*

SCENE III.

COUNT JEAN, *then* THE MASK *and* ALIX.

COUNT JEAN.

We have got here at last! [*He gazes around him.*
Ten years! What things
Have passed away since then! What tears this room,
Then mourning for its mistress, saw me shed!
The very chairs and tables are the same!
But ah! ten years have fled; ten centuries!

[1] Title given to the second son of the King of France during the old régime.

Ill-fated woman! O ye walls! my soul
That veils itself for all,— ye know it well!
The secret of the evil I have borne
And of the evil I have wrought is hid
From every human eye, save mine alone!
But now is not the time for selfish tears.
We must be quick.

[*He turns back to the half open panel and leans over the dark staircase.*

This is the place. Come up.

THE MASK (*flinging his cloak and hat on the ground*).

Alix! I love you! I am free! And now
The world is yours and mine!
[*To* COUNT JEAN.] Oh, rid me of
This hideous mask!

COUNT JEAN.

At once.

[*He makes a sign to* THE MASK *to be seated, then draws a file from the haversack and begins filing the padlock of the mask.*

THE MASK.

At last! at last!
But where are we?

COUNT JEAN.

We are remote from man
And close to God. The dead a vigil keep
Above us, and a sainted, loving shade
Our guardian is. Your guide is an old soldier.

[*Pointing to* ALIX, *who after entering has knelt in silence on a prie-Dieu in the corner of the theatre.*

An angel prays for us. Fear nothing.

THE MASK.

Thanks!

COUNT JEAN.

To-morrow we start for the frontier. Then
Two days will take us to Mezière. Our friends
Are arming. Meanwhile we must spend the night
In this deserted castle quietly.

[*While speaking, he has completed the filing of the lock of the mask, which gives way and at length opens.*

Behold!

[*He takes the mask off the prisoner and lays it on a round table in one of the angles of the apartment. When* THE PRISONER *is freed from the mask he looks for an instant as if he were made giddy by happiness, and appears to breathe at ease with immense delight. He is a fine young man about sixteen years old.*

THE PRISONER.

O God!

ALIX (*surveying him*).

How beautiful he is!
My very dreams have wronged him!

THE PRISONER.

Ah, at last!
The shadow that did fold me in its depths,
The ghastly shadow melts away! I stand
With head erect, and boldly plunge myself
In air and liberty and light! All things
Are radiant with brightness. If I could
But clutch them as they flit! — Alix! Alix!
Not eyes alone but every feature sees!
Oh, the fresh air! on every side the air!
It sports amid my locks! And I can kiss
Thy hand and go wherever I may list!
Can it be true? Am I indeed myself?

How pure the night! Thy smile transports my soul!
All Nature with her myriad voices speaks
To all my ravished senses; and I see!
I hear, I breathe, I live! I leave, Alix,
At last that gloomy cloud, and feel transfigured!

COUNT JEAN (*who has never taken his eyes off* THE PRISONER, *and who appears sunk in a deep reverie*).

A strange resemblance!

THE PRISONER (*going to the window and opening it impetuously*).

O ye starry skies! —
Yes, I was dead! For me the world at length
Has raised her veil. That mask was hell itself!
Come hither to this window!
[*He draws* ALIX *near the casement.*
See yon trees;
How beautiful they are! And all things smile!
And all things pierce my soul! 'T is wondrous strange.

ALIX.

Poor friend!

COUNT JEAN (*thoughtful*).

I see the meaning of the mask!

THE PRISONER (*intoxicated with joy*).

My Alix, we shall fly! — yes fly together —
Into some happy land where none know fear,
Where Nature, child of God, shall be our own!
The stars shall shine in azure skies as now,
The woods in welcome bend their heads as now,
And with their festal murmurs greet our ears;
We 'll drink in that pure air that cools the blood,
And love each other!

[*He falls on his knees, holding* ALIX *in his arms.*
O almighty God!
We thank thee!

COUNT JEAN (*to* THE PRISONER).

Come! there is no time to lose.
We must take measures for our safe departure.

TO ALIX.

Come with me. Tagus waits for us below.
And you know, madame, where to find the keys;
We shall return for you.

[*He leaves with* ALIX *by the panel which closes on them.* THE PRISONER, *left alone, fixes his eyes with rapture on the sky.*

THE PRISONER.

Oh, glorious sky!
To-morrow I shall walk beneath thy vault,
Shall boldly walk like others, and shall tread
The highways, as they do who move along
In careless freedom, with no thought that some
Poor captive may regard them as they pass!
O bliss!
[*Noise of steps in the gallery at the back. He turns round frightened.*
I hear some steps.
[*He goes to the door at the back and looks.*
No, nothing stirs.
[*A faint light appears in the gallery. He fixes a terrified gaze on it.*
Who is yon pallid man in crimson shroud?
There is another. He is clad in black.
They come this way! Oh, whither shall I fly?
[*He runs to the door by which he has entered and tries to open it, but in vain.*

This door? Oh, it is locked!

[*He runs to the door on the right, but also fails.*

And this one too!

[*He hides behind the screen, which he folds up and shuts on himself again.*

Just Heaven!

[*Enter* THE CARDINAL *accompanied by* CHANDENIER, *the captain of his gendarmes.* CHANDENIER *carries a large portfolio shut, in one hand, and in the other a candelabrum.* THE CARDINAL, *pale, sick, coughing at intervals, and pressing his hand against his breast, leans on the arm of* CHANDENIER. *His eyes wander round the apartment, and he appears surprised to find no one in it.*

SCENE IV.

THE CARDINAL, CHANDENIER, THE PRISONER, *concealed.*

THE CARDINAL.

Ah! None!

[*To* CHANDENIER.] I run some danger here.
Station a hundred of my body-guard
Around the castle.

THE PRISONER (*half opening the screen*).

Who are these two fiends?
Great God! I 'm lost.

THE CARDINAL.

Well, well, her majesty
Has not stayed for me.

CHANDENIER.

Is she much incensed?

THE CARDINAL.

Why does she give herself such useless pain?
Time was her anger well did suit a queen, —
'T is but the screaming of a woman now.
Stay in that lobby with your lieutenant;
I shall stay here until the Queen awakes, —
It will not inconvenience me too much
And speak to her I must. Oh, very well!
Place all that 's needed on the table.

[CHANDENIER *places the candelabra and the portfolio on the table.*

Oh!
And by the way, pray, leave your dagger with me.

[CHANDENIER *takes the dagger from his belt and obeys; then, at a sign from* THE CARDINAL *he leaves.*

THE CARDINAL (*playing with the dagger, and feeling its point with his finger*).

Who knows? The adage says that prudence is
The mother of safety.

[*He lays the poniard on the table.*

THE PRISONER (*who has been observing everything with terror*).

Help me, O my God!

[*As soon as* CHANDENIER *has disappeared,* THE CARDINAL *takes a little key from his girdle and opens the portfolio, the cover of which has a mirror inside, which is seen when the cover is raised. The portfolio when opened becomes a desk. In one corner there is an inkstand, in the other a pot of rouge with its accessories. Part of a map is seen hanging from the portfolio.* THE CARDINAL *unrolls it, examines it for a few minutes, and then rises, coughing.*

THE CARDINAL (*in a reverie*).

Health is a hopeless day-dream; I have all, —
Wealth, power, and honours, — all excepting life!
I feel I 'm dying!
Ah! what happy days
I passed when I was but a musketeer,
At twenty-five! [*He rises and looks in the glass.*
How frightful I do look!
[*He puts some rouge on his cheeks, then falls again into a reverie.*
Can we arrange this marriage? It must fail!
All these affronts must needs disgust the King.
Well, then! we 'll take another, — Charles the Second,
A claimant to the English throne; if not,
John, King of Portugal, lord of the seas,
Offers me the Infante through the Pope;
And there again is Conti. We shall see.
'T would be most bitter! Still, in any case,
I am the master; all depends on me!
[*Pressing his hand on his breast.*
I suffer! Ah! [*He coughs.*]
To work! To do great deeds
Is to forget that one must die at last!
[*He unrolls the map and examines it with deep attention.*
No more reverses! France by growing calm
Has calmed the world. And yet the nobles still
Are insolent, the parliaments are jealous.
But I have tamed Bourdeaux, Toulouse, and Rennes, —
And Paris! mighty hyra-headed Paris!
No more wild frensy! No more desperate strife!
[*He unfolds a letter.*
Now for the offer of the Emperor. [*Running it over.*
'T is well. He too would smother every spark.
He yields. [*Gazing on the map.*
We take both Alsace and Brisach.

With the Three Bishopricks, and bide our time
For Besançon and Brussels. Later on,
My secret aims shall reach the wished for goal.
Between the Rhine and Pyrenees can France
Alone her safety find. A hostile force
In two or three days' march could Paris reach.
'T is almost on the frontier; it should be
The centre of the realm. I will attain
The ends I aim at without noise or war.
[*He raises his head and gazes on the portrait of* CARDINAL RICHLIEU.
O Richelieu! we shall accomplish each
A giant task; he made a King — and I
Am making France.
[*Again letting his eyes wander over the map.*
And yet that is but little.
[*He rises.*] The edifice I rear is vaster than
A kingdom and more perfect than a king, —
A dream that burned my eyes through sleepless nights,
A fabric, formless yet, at which I toil,
With painful labour piling stone on stone,
A mass of rivers, mountains, capes, and seas,
Which God rough-hewed before he shaped our clay,
Which, after Philip the Second, Richelieu
Left as a sacred legacy to me;
A work I have perfected by a thought,
Which I complete at length, and which receives
From me its quickening law. Thou art that work!
Thou whom I seem to see hang menacing
Above my head! Thou who dost show thyself
From out the shadow to my awe-struck gaze!
O Europe! vault immense that rests on France!
[*Returning to the map.*
Each moment Germany grows pale, and Spain
The lesser grows the larger she becomes;

The peace of Munster makes France queen of all.
The lion turns to cat. The Emperor
Caresses us. The North scarce bends the knee
In presence of the Holy Roman Empire ;
Instead thereof she turns her eyes to us.
Alone the Treves elector hesitates
About acceptance of my plans. He is
A priest and old. How get him in my hands ?
Egad ! he is a cadet of the house
Of Deux-Ponts, and we 'll manage him through it !
[*In a reverie.*] A new ambassador, — some valet bribed.
The Sultan is twelve years ; his empire totters.
There is no State but has impending o'er
Its brow some threatening rock. Thus Stockholm brings
To Copenhagen danger. Moscow is
A menace to Warsaw. I've crushed the Swedes.
I hold the Muscovite grand-duke in leash ;
And when he 's dreaming of a new crusade,
I let him send an embassy to Venice.
I watch Turin, — a link that often snaps.
The houses of Farnese, Est, Gonzague
Will die out soon ! A child holds Mantua,
While in Modena a duenna rules ;
I manage both with neither fuss nor flurry.
As for republics, why, my worthy doges
Manipulate them well. The virtues of
These Brutuses become more mild with age.
For me Paoli governs Genoa,
Cornaro, Venice. Glorious country that ! —
The poniard always, but the scaffold never !
As for the little democratic States,
We must, in spite of the diplomatists,
Leave Lubeck to the Germans, and Ragusa
To the Dalmatians, — toys to please these children !
So all goes as I wish, is sure and safe.

[*Musing.*] Scarce two dark specks on this fair azure sky,—
Madrid which plots, and London which resists;
Philip the fatuous and woe-begone,
And Cromwell, luckiest of madmen. Pshaw!
[*Turning again to the map.*
O Rome! [*Musing.*]
Thou stoopest 'neath the weight of years!
Thou speakest, and thou dost not understand;
Thou dost not fall, yet bendest in such sort
That seeing thee our wavering minds do float
Between the towers of Babel and of Pisa!
[*Raising his head.*
And there are other interests of which
We must take thought and be the bulwark. France
Now shines with radiance in all lands. Her eye
Takes in the world. Happy, strong, and armed,
She quenches discord as she passes by.
The Sophi, who had captured Kurdistan,
Would Candahar tear from the Mogul's grasp,
And from the Sultan sever Babylon.
We made him pause. Our merchants take the place
Once held by Sclavic and Armenian traders,
And sell their wares from Tigris to the Ganges.
We 're masters everywhere. Our soldiers are
In Hindostan, our Jesuits in China,
And — surest means of reigning undisturbed —
We build our warlike engines through the world.
But I am old, and broken down by years, —
The envious years, worst rivals of my fame!
The shadow that I sink in, step by step,
Reveals a something which may be a tomb.
Ah, well! if then that gloomy hour be nigh
When o'er my bier the voice of God shall cry,
"What hast thou done?" I can say in reply:
"O God! the waves did beat upon my head!

When I reached shore the State was tempest tossed;
The spirit of the past and present met,
And in what furious strife, Thou knowst well!
Louis the Eleventh gave to lawlessness
A wound that Francis widened ere he died.
Yet still the giant lived. Even Richelieu
Saw not the close of that grand final conflict.
For all these men, by virtue of a law
That swayed their being to its inmost depths,
Made war. But I make peace throughout the world!"
[*Rising.*] Throughout the world! Ah, what a glorious thought!
For this most sacred of all works I toil,
Advancing day by day. The King of France
Is in my hands a glorious implement.
I have accomplished all, and stand upon
The pinnacle of greatness! There are neither
Rocks nor hindrances.

* * * * * * * * * *

ANGELO:

A Tragedy.

To

JOHN ROGERS HERBERT, Esq., R.A.

Corresponding Member of the Institute of France,

AS AN HUMBLE TRIBUTE

TO HIS GREAT GENIUS EVIDENCED

IN

Works of Sublimity and Beauty,

WHICH ARE A LASTING HONOUR

TO THIS

AGE AND COUNTRY,

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED

BY

HIS DEVOTED FRIEND AND ADMIRER.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Angelo Malipieri, Podesta.
Rodolfo.
Homodei.
Anafesto-Galeofa.
Troilo, *an Usher.*
The Dean of St. Anthony of Padua.
The Patriarch of St. Anthony.
A Black Page.
Two Night Watch.
Catarina Bragadini.
La Tisbe.
Reginella.
Dafne.

Venetian Nobles, Visitors, Attendants, Archers, Sbirros, etc.

PADUA, 1549.

ANGELO.

ACT I.

FIRST DAY.

SCENE. — *A garden illuminated for a night fête. On the right the Podesta's palace brilliantly lighted and whence proceed the sounds of music, having an entrance on the garden and an arcaded gallery on the ground floor where visitors are seen moving to and fro. Near the entrance a stone bench. On the left another bench, on which, in shadow, may be seen* HOMODEI *lying asleep. In the background, above the level of the trees, are perceived the grey outlines of Padua, of the sixteenth century, against a clear night sky. Towards the end of the act the dawn appears.*

SCENE I.

LA TISBE, *in a rich ball costume.* ANGELO MALIPIERI, *ducal robe and vestments, with scarf of gold.* HOMODEI, *asleep; long robe of brown wool, closed in front, red breeches; a guitar by his side.*

LA TISBE.

True, you are master here, master of all;
The great Podesta and unquestion'd lord
Of life and death, embodied power and will,
Imposed upon us by the queenlike Venice,
That all on every side, who dare to gaze,
May recognize in you the sombre presence,
Weight, form, and majesty of the Republic.
Parade our streets and every casement closes,

The passers-by skulk off, the households tremble,
And our poor Paduans with ill-graced visage
Look cowed and crestfallen as the slavish Moslem
Before his sultan's frown. Well, such is Padua;
But visit Brescia, and the scene is changed.
Even Venice dare not trample upon Brescia;
She dare not strike. Let her but raise her hand,
Brescia will bite, while Padua only licks it.
Oh, 't is disgrace, 't is shame! Well, then, my lord,
Though you be master here, master of all, —
Even, as you think, of me, — yet hear my voice;
Nay, have no fear. You 'll hear the truth; but not
On the Republic, — on affairs of State.
No; on your own affairs! You are a man
So strangely formed, I understand you not;
You love *me*, yet are jealous of your wife.

ANGELO.

Jealous of you, too, madame.

LA TISBE.

Holy saints!
You have no need to tell me that; and yet
You have no rights o'er me. I am not yours.
I 'm called your mistress, your all-powerful mistress, —
But you know well I am not.

ANGELO.

Your night fête
In splendour, madame, surpasses all I 've seen.

LA TISBE.

I 'm but a poor comedian of the theatre
Whom you permit to offer to grave senators
These festivals, that you may be amused, —

And with at best but poor success; your face
Is far more sombre than my mask is black.
My prodigality of lamps and torches
Fails to remove the shadow. What in music
You gain is scarcely render'd back in pleasure.
Do try and laugh for once.

ANGELO.

Yes, I will laugh.
Did you not tell me the young man who came
To Padua with you was your brother?

LA TISBE.

Yes;
What follows?

ANGELO.

You just lately spoke to him.
Who was the other that companioned him?

LA TISBE.

His friend; one Anafesto-Galeofa,
New from Vicenza.

ANGELO.

How is your brother named?

LA TISBE.

Rodolfo, my good lord, Rodolfo. Twenty times
Have I already told you. Can you not
Find livelier subjects to discourse upon?

ANGELO.

Pardon; I'll trouble you no more with questions.
Know you, last night you played "La Rosamonda"
With wondrous grace? Oh, happy Padua,

Envied of all in thus possessing you,
The admiration of all Italy!
To hear the mob applauding you torments me;
To see your beauty common to all gazers.
No one but I should look upon you, Tisbe! —
Tell me, who was the man in mask to whom
You spoke this evening, standing near the portal?

LA TISBE (*smiling*).

"Pardon, Tisbe! I'll ask you no more questions.
Who was the man?" Ha, ha! — The man, my lord,
Was Tasca — Virgilio Tasca.

ANGELO.

My lieutenant?

LA TISBE.

My lord, your sbirro.

ANGELO.

What sought *you* from him?

LA TISBE.

You would be nicely caught if I refused
To tell.

ANGELO.

Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

Nay, nay, I will be docile;
Here is the history. You know that I,
Comedian, child of the people, — something
To be caressed to-day despised to-morrow,
As it may please my masters, — even I,
Low as I may have been, had once a mother.
Great lord, have you had one? Knew you what 't was
To be a child, a poor child, weak and famished,

Naked and miserable in the world,
And feel that you had near you and around you,
Ay, and above you, walking when you walked,
When you stopped, stopping, smiling when you smiled,
A woman? No, the child knows not that 't is
Even a woman. 'T is an angel that
Looks down and smiles; from whom we learn to speak,
From whom we learn to sing, to laugh, to love;
Who warms us with her warmth, who near her heart
Enfolds our feeble form, feeds with her milk,
Bestows her health, her life; whom we call *mother*,
Who calls us *child*,— sweet sounds that angels hear
With tears of joy — Well *I* had such a mother!
Poor soul, she sang, here and in Brescia,
Morlachian songs in th' open squares for bread.
I roamed with her; that was my life. One day, —
'T was by the statue of Gattā-Melāta, —
Chanting these rhymes she little understood,
Some jests which they contained, aimed at the Council,
Made her plebeian audience chuckle, but
Gave dire offence to a Venetian noble,
Who, turning to his suite, with smother'd wrath,
Said calmly, "To the gallows with that woman!"
In Venice 't is as quickly done as that.
They bound her hands; she spoke no word. What use?
She pressed me to her bosom; a hot tear
Fell on my cheek; then, crucifix in hand,
She looked to heaven. The cord was round her throat!
Before me ever is that crucifix
Of burnished copper, my name "Tisbe" carved
Roughly upon the base; young was I then.
I saw these people manacle my mother,
I screamed not, spoke not, could not even weep:
Marble, ice-cold, I stood; nor thought, nor feeling!
'T was like a dream! The crowd was silent, too.

With the Venetian was a gentle maiden,
This noble's daughter, who held him by the hand,
The sweetest child! who, moved to instant pity,
Fell at her father's feet, her eyes like rivers,
And with imploring lip, beseeching heart,
And urgent wooing, won my mother's pardon.
Once free, she placed, in gratitude, her cross
Within that pitying angel's hand, and said:
"Preserve this crucifix; and trust my word,
Should evil days arrive, 't will bring good fortune."
My mother 's dead: her home is with the blessed!
Her grateful promise is my heart's first duty.
No longer poor, I live on the one thought
To meet again the child who saved my mother.
Grown woman now, she must be now unhappy;
Each town I enter, I seek out forthwith
Some spy, Bargello, or official agent;
I tell my story and invoke his aid.
And unto him who may succeed I promise
Ten thousand golden sequins as reward.
And now, my lord, you know why at the portal
This afternoon I was in converse with
Your trusted sbirro, or we 'll say lieutenant,
Virgilio Tasca. Have I answered you?

ANGELO.

Ten thousand sequins for the finding her!
What will you give this woman when she 's found?

LA TISBE.

My life, if it will serve her.

ANGELO.

By what means
Hope you to find her?

LA TISBE.

My mother's crucifix.

ANGELO.

The which she will have lost or parted with.

LA TISBE.

We lose not that which with our heart we 've gained.

ANGELO.

Look, madame, there 's a man! Why lies he there?
Who is he, Tisbe?

LA TISBE.

True, a man lies yonder
In a sound sleep. Do not torment yourself
On his account. 'T is my poor Homodei.

ANGELO.

What Homodei? Who is this Homodei?

LA TISBE.

This Homodei, my lord, is, as you see,
A man, — much as this Tisbe is a woman;
A guitar player, on behalf of whom
My excellent good friend, his reverend lordship
The Primicerio of St. Mark, addressed
To me a letter, which shall be duly laid
Before your jealous eyes; and with the missive
There came a gift.

ANGELO.

Indeed!

LA TISBE.

Indeed, my lord;
A true Venetian present, — a quaint casket,

Containing two small phials, one white, one black:
A powerful narcotic in the one
Inducing for twelve hours the soundest sleep
Resembling death; a poison in the other, —
Such a sure deadly draught as Malaspina
Doctor'd the Pope with in a pill of aloes.
The reverend Primicerio says I might
Upon occasion find a use for it.
(Most delicate attention!) And then adds,
That he who brings his present is an idiot.
My lord, you must have seen him the last fortnight
Playing and singing, taking food, or sleeping
Under the sky as now. He came from Venice,
And goes hence to Vicenza. (So my mother
Was used to wander!) While he wills to stay
I 'll keep him here. This fête does not amuse him,
And so he sleeps. That is his history.

ANGELO.

You answer for this man?

LA TISBE.

You make me laugh.
A guitar player, an idiot, and a dreamer, —
And the man scares you! Ah, my dear Podesta,
What's your disease, that thus you pass your life
In questioning this, that, and everything?
Say, is it jealousy or fear?

ANGELO.

'T is one and both.

LA TISBE.

Your jealousy I comprehend, — you watch
And guard two women. As for fear, you are
The master here, where all hold *you* in dread.

ANGELO.

And therefore must I fear. As you suggest,
I am all-powerful here, tyrant, — Podesta,
The sov'reign lord and despot of this town,
The tiger's fang upon the helpless sheep.
But, look you, Tisbe, although absolute,
Above my head, grand, dark, and terrible,
Looms Venice! What is Venice? I will tell you.
'T is the State Inquisition. 'T is the Council
Of Ten, Tisbe! Let 's whisper low that word;
For close around spies may be watching us, —
Men whom we know not, yet who know us well;
Seen no where, and yet hovering round our scaffolds,
Our heads within their grasp, — yours, mine, the Doge's;
With to the eye, no cognizable mark;
A mystic sign alone beneath their garment.
No robe, no scarf, no cap of office there,
To show this man or this is one of them.
Agents, spies, headsmen, compass you around,
With direful visage, like those heads of bronze
In fatal Venice, seeming mute as death,
Yet speaking with a voice so hard and terrible,
To all who pass, "Denounce." Once you 're denounced,
You're seized; once seized, the end is not far off.
In Venice, all is secret, hidden, sure;
Judged, executed. Look, nor word, nor cry
Is possible. The victim gagged and bandaged,
The headsman masked. I spoke just now of scaffolds,
But I was wrong. You die not so in Venice;
You disappear. Missed from the bosom of
Your family, — where must we seek? Nay, ask
The secret wells; ask the canal Orfano.
Night and the silent grave alone know all!
Hark! a dull sound is heard upon the waters;
Pass quickly, nor inquire. As for the rest,

Venice means balls and fêtes, music, and lights,
And gondolas, and mirth, and theatres, Tisbe, —
That one, the only side *you* know of Venice,
Pleasure! As senator, *I* know the other.
Trust me, in every palace — mine, the Doge's, —
There wind dark tortuous passages, that hear
All the intimate gossip of saloons and chambers;
Lobbies, whose secret panel doorways move
To an undreamt strangers touch; one who, we feel,
Glides like a serpent round about our hearth.
In foul, mysterious caverns 'neath our feet
Evil men come and go, and do strange deeds;
Oft blending private vengeance with their craft.
Night after night I raise me in my bed,
Startled, as footsteps pass within the walls.
Such is my life! and yet I may crush Padua.
Podesta, on condition I am despot!
Have you a foe? Speak, and he 's punished; but
Plead not to me for any living soul.
I am your slave: I can refuse you nought;
But it would be my ruin! I may not pardon.
Tyrant of Padua, I am the tool of Venice!
You guess not the surveillance of that city.
Employ a workman on a secret lock
Down in your deepest cell; before 't is finished
The Council have the key safe in their pocket.
Madame, my very valet spies upon me;
My dearest friend 's a spy; my confessor,
In Heaven's name a spy; and she who vows
She loves me, — loves me, Tisbe, — even she
Betrays me to the Ten.

LA TISBE.

Oh, my good lord!

ANGELO.

I do not speak of you, — you never yet
Told me you loved me; yet do I repeat:
All that looks on me is the eye of Venice;
All round that hears me is the ear of Venice;
Whatever touches me, the hand of Venice,
That deftly feels and feels till it can crush!
Magnifico, Podesta, — that I am!
Who may to-morrow in my private chamber
Hear some official sbirro whisper, "Follow!"
Nought but a wretched spy — yet I shall follow.
Where? To some vault profound, whence he alone
Will issue without me! To be of Venice
Is to hang by a thread o'er an abyss,
To bend over a furnace at white heat, —
My furnace Padua! — With visage masked,
Doing the work of tyrant 'gainst my will;
Around me hopes and terrors, fears, precautions;
Misdoubting at each sound some dread explosion,
Or trembling lest I may be laid a corse,
Like the Alchemist, by my own deadly compounds!
Feel for me then, but ask not why I fear!

LA TISBE.

God knows I feel for you.

ANGELO.

Yes, I 'm the tool
Whereby one people doth enslave another;
Tools that are quickly used and quickly broken!
In all my misery, one thing alone
In this world offer'd me the hope of peace, —
Your love, dear Tisbe! Yet you love me not.
Tell me, at least, you do not love another.

LA TISBE.

On that point be you calm.

ANGELO.

You answer me
With reservation.

LA TISBE.

I answer as I may.

ANGELO.

Refuse me your heart's love, I am content,
So that no other — If I thought another —

LA TISBE.

If, when you look like that, you think you 're handsome,
You 're much deceived.

ANGELO.

When will you love me, Tisbe?

LA TISBE.

When all around you love you.

ANGELO.

Then, alas!
Yet you must not quit Padua. Stay at Padua.
Dost hear me, Tisbe? If you fly, my life
Will fly with you. But see, they 're coming to us.
They 've seen us long together, talking here;
Suspicion might be bred of that in Venice.
I leave you.

[*Pausing and pointing to* HOMODEI.
You will answer for this man?

LA TISBE.

As for a sleeping child.

ANGELO.

Farewell, dear Tisbe.
I trust you with your brother. [*Exit* ANGELO.

SCENE II.

LA TISBE; RODOLFO, *dressed simply, and in black, with a black plume in his hat;* HOMODEI, *still sleeping.*

LA TISBE.

With Rodolfo!
Rodolfo whom I love! No, servile tyrant;
[*Turning to where* ANGELO *went out.*
Blind bat! he 's not my brother, but my lover.
Come then, my banish'd hero, noble exile,
My generous loved one, look me in the face!
Thou art brave and handsome, and I love thee!

RODOLFO.

Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

Yet, why didst come to Padua? Do you see
We are tangled in the snare, and cannot fly;
While you, forced to deceit, must act my brother!
I tremble day and night lest this Podesta,
Holding us in a leash he will not slip,
And with his foolish passion for thy Tisbe,
Discover all. The torture of that thought!
But fear not; he will nothing gain from me.
You 're sure of that Rodolfo, are you not?
Yet I would not that you felt too secure;
For I would have thee anxious, jealous of me,
Doubting, yet confident.

RODOLFO.

My charming Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

Jealous as I am, — to the finger-tips;
Not like this Angelo, who thinks he 's jealous, —
This man, this Malipieri, who believes
He loves, yet mingles with his love all sorts
Of other foolish fears and mad suspicions;
As if one could see spies, or cells, or scaffolds,
When jealous! No, there is but one thing then
The lover's eye *can* see, — his jealousy.
Well then with me, Rodolfo, so it is.
Smile or address a word to other women,
You ache my heart. What right have they to thee?
Rival! Give me no rival. I will take
Her life. Thou art the only man, Rodolfo,
I ever loved. Dark was my heav'n till now;
'T is now bright glory. Thou 'rt my orb of light,
Thy love th' effulgent east of rising day.
Other men chilled me; thou hast given me life.
Why were we strangers all these years gone by?
All corners of my heart that have been dead
Will now revive. What joy this power to be
An instant with you, to converse with you!
But, oh! the folly of it, — here in Padua,
Living thus in restraint. Dear, loved Rodolfo! —

[*Speaking off as if to* ANGELO.

Yes, he 's my lover; yes, my lord, — my brother!
It makes me mad with joy thus to talk freely
And at my ease with you. Am I not mad?
I know you think me mad. Tell me you love me.

RODOLFO.

Who could help loving you?

LA TISBE.

Say that again,
Coldly like that, I shall be angry with you.
Love me, oh, God! Love me! Yet must I hence,
Must show myself; I cannot linger here.
But tell me Rodolf, why so sad a look.
You are not now unhappy?

RODOLFO.

No, dear Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

You are not suff'ring?

RODOLFO.

No.

LA TISBE.

You are not jealous?

RODOLFO.

No.

LA TISBE.

But you must be jealous, sir, or else
You love me not. Look not so sad. Fear you,
Like me? Each nerve within me trembles;
And yet there 's no one knows you 're not my brother.

RODOLFO.

No one but Anafesto.

LA TISBE.

He 's your friend.

[*Enter* ANAFESTO-GALEOFA.

And at the moment here he comes. I 'll trust
You in his care. Promise, good Anafesto,

You will not let him speak to any woman
While I 'm away. [*Smiling.*]

ANAFESTO.

Your wish shall be obeyed.
[La Tisbe *goes out.*

SCENE III.

Rodolfo; Anafesto-Galeofa; Homodei, *still asleep.*

ANAFESTO (*looking after her*).

Oh, charming siren! Happy man! She loves you.

RODOLFO.

I am not happy, friend. I love not her.

ANAFESTO.

What 's that you say?

RODOLFO.

Who is this man who sleeps?

ANAFESTO.

Only the poor musician.

RODOLFO.

Ah, the Idiot —

ANAFESTO.

You love not Tisbe? Can what you say be true?

RODOLFO.

Did I say that? Forget it.

ANAFESTO.

Why, she 's charming!

RODOLFO.

True, she is charming; yet I love her not.

ANAFESTO.

Explain.

RODOLFO.

You must not ask me.

ANAFESTO.

I, your friend!

LA TISBE (*re-entering and running to* RODOLFO *smiling*).

See, I am back; only to say one word,
A private word, — I love you. Now I 'm gone.
[LA TISBE *runs off.*

ANAFESTO (*looking at her as she leaves*).

Alas, poor Tisbe!

RODOLFO.

Deep within my heart
A secret lies which I have told to no one.

ANAFESTO.

The day you think me most your friend you 'll tell me.
To-day you 're over sad.

RODOLFO.

Leave me a while.

ANAFESTO *goes out.* RODOLFO *seats himself on the bench near the door, his head sunk in his hands.* HOMODEI *then opens his eyes, rises, and slowly moves towards* RODOLFO *standing erect behind him.*

SCENE IV.

RODOLFO, HOMODEI. HOMODEI *places his hand on the shoulder of* RODOLFO, *who turns and looks at him in amazement.*

HOMODEI.

Your name is Ezzelino da Romano;
You know 't is not Rodolfo. You 're the scion
Of an ancient family who reigned in Padua,
Were banished by the State two centuries back.
But now unknown, wandering from town to town
Under feigned names, even on Venetian soil,
You often risk your life. 'T is just seven years
That in the streets of Venice you were seen.
One day, — 'twas in a church (that of St. George), —
Attracted by the charms of a sweet girl
You knelt beside her, your whole soul absorbed!
Mass o'er, you followed not. 'T was wise; for that
Would have been almost certain death in Venice.
Thenceforth your visits to the church were constant;
So were the lady's. Mutual love arose,
Yet knew you not her name, — have never known;
To you she passed as Catarina merely.
You found the means to write, she to reply;
A rendezvous was fixed, — 't was with a saint!
A holy maid, Cecilia the blessed!
Your lives were pure; your loves as deep and maddening
As ever loves could be, remaining pure.
The girl was noble; that was all you knew.
A noble of Venice can only, by the law,
Wed a Venetian noble or a king.
You 're not Venetian, you 're no longer king;
And as a banished man, debarr'd all claim —
One day you missed her at the rendezvous,

And from the sanctified Cecilia learnt
That she was married. You were never told
Her husband's name, more than you knew her father's.
You turned your back on Venice. From that day
You 've roamed all Italy in search of her;
You 've tried distraction, pleasure, folly, vice,
Without effect. You 've tried again to love;
Thought sometimes to succeed, as with this actress,
But still in vain. The one love conquer'd all!
In this town now you pass for Tisbe's brother.
The great Podesta, Angelo Malipieri,
Is seized with a deep passion for this Tisbe.
But what *to you* has chanced in Padua, where
You live a life within a life? — I 'll tell you.
One evening, 't was in February last,
On the Molino bridge, a female veiled
Passed by your side, and took you by the hand,
Leading you to the Strada San Piero;
There stand the ruins of the ancient palace
Destroyed by the third reigning Ezzelino,
Your ancestor, — the Palace Magaruffi.
Within those ruins you were shown a hovel;
Within that hovel, what? — your Catarina!
Whom you still love, and who for seven years
Has loved you truly. Well, from that day forth
Three times a week you met, and yet in spite
Of passion and temptation, she remains
Faithful both to her love and to her honour, —
Ay, faithful to her husband as to you.
Last month your happiness received a check;
She came not to the hovel. For five weeks
She has been lost to you. 'T was that her husband
Began to doubt her, and she 's close encaged.
But see, 't is dawn; daylight will soon appear.
You 'll search, but will not find; you 'll never find her.

RODOLFO.

Dead!

HOMODEI.

What if *I* could show you her to-night!

RODOLFO.

Who are you?

HOMODEI.

One who answers to no questions. —
So then you would not care to visit her?

RODOLFO.

Not care! Oh, were the heavens to fall, I'd see her
Though 't were one moment, and I died the next!

HOMODEI.

Then you shall see her.

RODOLFO.

Where?

HOMODEI.

At her own home.

RODOLFO.

But tell me then, who is she? What her name?

HOMODEI.

When there, you 'll know.

RODOLFO.

Then Heaven has sent you to me!

HOMODEI.

I cannot tell. — To-night when the moon rises,
Or simpler still, at midnight, let me find you
By the Palazzo Alberto di Baon.
Midnight, remember!

RODOLFO.

And you will not tell me
By what name I may know you?

HOMODEI.

By what name?
The Idiot!

[HOMODEI *goes out.*

RODOLFO (*alone*).

Who 's this man? What is 't to me?
Midnight! 'T is long till then. Oh, Catarina!
To be with thee! Well, I 'll not fail; for 't is
A joy too cheaply purchased with my life.

SCENE V.

RODOLFO, LA TISBE.

LA TISBE.

You see I 'm here again. Good-day, Rodolfo!
I could delay no longer. I follow thee
About, — away from thee I cannot live;
I see and feel through thee; I am the shadow
Of thy dear body, thou the soul of mine.

RODOLFO.

Beware! Mine is a fated family.
A curse hangs o'er us, Tisbe; a destiny
Which most inexorably ever has been —
Must be fulfilled Those who love us — we kill.

LA TISBE.

Love me then first, and you shall kill me after.

RODOLFO.

Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

Then weep for me. I ask no more.

RODOLFO.

Tisbe, you 're worthy of an angel's love.
[RODOLFO *kisses her hand and leaves her.*

LA TISBE.

And so he leaves me; rushes out of sight!
What is his grief?
[*Looks at bench.*
Ah! Homodei awake?
[HOMODEI *appears at back of stage.*

SCENE VI.

LA TISBE, HOMODEI.

HOMODEI.

Rodolfo's name, in truth, is Ezzelino.
The homeless outcast is a prince; the Idiot
A shrewd observer, sleeping a cat's sleep, —
Eye closed, ear open.

LA TISBE.

What says he?

HOMODEI.

Look here.
Guitars have cords responding to our touch:
So of man's heart and woman's, they have strings
That one can play upon.

LA TISBE.

What can this mean?

HOMODEI.

Madame, it means that if by accident
You miss a handsome youth with sable plume,
It may be I can guess the happy chamber
Where he will pass the night.

LA TISBE.

Not with a woman?

HOMODEI.

Fair as Diana!

LA TISBE.

Nay, 't is false! Who are you?

HOMODEI.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

You are not what you seem'd.
Unhappy me! Then the Podesta's doubts
Were based on truth! Thou art some fearful man.
Whence come you? Rodolf, say you, closeted
This very night, in parley with a woman?
Is that what you would say?

HOMODEI.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

Then what you say is false. Rodolfo loves me.

HOMODEI.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

Ah, miserable wretch,
Your tongue is false! Oh, God, how false!

You are a spy, — a vile suborned spy!
Have I then enemies? Yet Rodolf loves me;
You cannot frighten me about his love;
I trust you not. It maddens you, I see,
To find your evil words have no effect.

HOMODEI.

You have observed, no doubt, that the Podesta
Upon his chain of gold wears a small trinket
Artistically wrought; it is a key.
Ask him to give 't you as an ornament.
Say you desire it; give no other reason.

LA TISBE.

A key, dost say? No, I'll not ask it of him.
I 'll ask for nothing. You would make me doubt
Rodolfo's honour. You are infamous.
I will not have the key; I will not hear you.

HOMODEI.

See! the Podesta comes. When you 've the key,
I 'll tell you how, to-night, 't will serve you well.
Farewell! I shall return.

LA TISBE.

Oh, wretched knave,
You will not understand! I'll have no key.
I trust Rodolfo and — I will not have it;
Nor will I say a word to the Podesta.
So trouble me no more; 't is useless. I
Do not believe you.

HOMODEI.

I 'll be quickly back.

[*He goes out.* *Enter* ANGELO.

SCENE VII.

LA TISBE, ANGELO.

LA TISBE.

Once more, my lord, you're here. Whom do you seek?

ANGELO.

'T was with Virgilio Tasca I would speak.

LA TISBE.

Are you still jealous?

ANGELO.

Still, and always, madame.

LA TISBE.

Jealous! Wherefore? I do not understand
This jealousy; 't is folly. Just assume
I loved a man, — think you I should be jealous?

ANGELO.

You do not love then.

LA TISBE.

Yes — *some one*, I love.

ANGELO.

Whom?

LA TISBE.

You.

ANGELO.

You love me? 'T is impossible!
You would but trifle with me. Yet, oh, Heaven!
Repeat what you have said.

LA TISBE.

I say I love you.

[*He approaches her with delight; she receives him in a fondling way, plays with his chain, etc.*

What is this little gem? I ne'er before
Remarked its workmanship; and jewell'd too!
By Benvenuto this must have been chisell'd!
'T is lovely! far more fitting for a lady
Than for a man.

ANGELO.

Tisbe, you 've filled my heart
With joy to overflowing with one word.

LA TISBE.

May be; yet you 'll not tell me what I ask.
What is this trinket?

ANGELO.

This? Why 't is a key.

LA TISBE.

Fancy! A key! I never could have guess'd
It was a key. Ah, now I look — And will
It open things? A real, real key?

ANGELO.

A real key, Tisbe.

LA TISBE.

Why, if that is all
I do not care to have it. You may keep it.

ANGELO.

What! Were you coveting this foolish trifle?

LA TISBE.

Because I thought it was an ornament;
Such lovely workmanship!

ANGELO.

Then take it, pray.

LA TISBE.

No. Had I known it was a key! — I tell you
I do not want it. 'T is of use to you.

ANGELO.

Oh, rarely; and besides I have another.
I swear 't will pleasure me if you will take it.

LA TISBE.

No, no; the fancy 's gone. You really open
Doors with this little key? 'T is very small!

ANGELO.

Such keys as these are made for hidden locks.
'T will open many doors, — among them, Tisbe,
The chamber where I sleep.

LA TISBE.

Your room, Podesta!
Well, since you press it on me, I will take it.
[*She takes the key.*

ANGELO.

Oh, thanks, and double thanks! Tisbe, at length
You have accepted something at my hands.

LA TISBE.

Ah, now I recollect, the Ambassador
Of France at Venice had a thing like this.
Say, did you know the Marshal de Montluc?
But I forgot, you Senators of Venice
May have no converse with ambassadors;
And I must say he was not over gentle.

The Huguenots who fell within his power
Were never spared by Monsieur de Montluc.
Stay; if I 'm not deceived, my lord, there is
Virgilio Tasca, whom you seek, down near
The gallery.

ANGELO.

Indeed!

LA TISBE.

Do you not want him?

ANGELO.

Yes; but why come upon me at this moment?

LA TISBE.

There, to the right.

ANGELO (*kissing her hand*).

Ah, Tisbe, you *do* love me?

LA TISBE.

There, there, you 'll lose him. He awaits you, see!
[ANGELO *goes out.* HOMODEI *enters.* TISBE *goes to him.*

SCENE VIII.

LA TISBE, HOMODEI.

LA TISBE.

I have the key.

HOMODEI.

Show me. Yes, that is it.
In this lord's palace is a gallery
Which looks on the Molino Bridge; hide there

To-night, behind the hangings — where you will —
I'll seek you there at two hours after midnight.

LA TISBE.

I'll pay you well. Meanwhile, accept this purse.

HOMODEI.

Yes; but pray hear me out. When I arrive
I'll point out the first door that you must open.
That service done, I leave you; without me
You can do all the rest, — walk straight before you.

LA TISBE.

What shall I find after the first door open'd?

HOMODEI.

A second. Use your key.

LA TISBE.

After the second?

HOMODEI.

A third. That key will open all.

LA TISBE.

And what
After the third?

HOMODEI.

After the third, you 'll see!

ACT II.

SECOND DAY.

SCENE. — *A chamber richly hung in scarlet trimmed with gold. In an angle to the left, a magnificent bedstead on a raised dais, and surmounted by a canopy supported upon twisted columns. From the four corners of the canopy hang crimson curtains which can be closed so as entirely to hide the bed. In an angle on the right, an open window; on the same side a door concealed or masked by tapestry hangings; near it a prie-dieu, above which, and suspended against the wall, hangs a crucifix of burnished copper. At the end of the chamber, large folding doors. Between the folding doors and the bed, another small door very much ornamented. Tables, easy chairs, sconces with candles, a grand wardrobe. Outside may be seen gardens, steeples, the moon shining. Books, etc., on the table.*

SCENE I.

DAFNE, REGINELLA, *afterwards* HOMODEI.

REGINELLA.

Dafne, 't is certain. Troilo, the night usher,
Told it me all. 'T was lately — the last time
My lady went to Venice — it occurred.
Some police spy dared to declare his love,
To write to her, to seek her very presence,
Till forced with ignominy from the palace.

DAFNE (*opening the door near the prie-dieu*).

How shocking, Reginella! But my lady
Is waiting for her missal.

REGINELLA (*arranging books on table*).

And the sequel
Was yet more terrible, and quite as true.

Poor Palinuro, who simply told his master
He 'd met this spy in the house, died suddenly
That very night, of poison! So you see
We must be prudent here and guard our tongues,
Or else the walls may hear.

DAFNE.

Then let me go.
We 'll talk some other time My lady waits.

REGINELLA (*still arranging books, eyes on table*).

If you 're impatient, go then, and I 'll follow.

[DAFNE *goes out and closes the door without* REGINELLA *being aware of it.*

I would advise you to keep perfect silence
Within these palace walls. The only room
Where one is safe is this. Here we can say
Just what we like, certain that when we speak
No one can overhear.

[*The wardrobe fixed in the wall turns round, allowing* HOMODEI *to pass in without being perceived; it then recloses.*

HOMODEI.

Here we can say
Just what we like, certain that when we speak
No one can overhear.

REGINELLA.

Good heavens!

HOMODEI.

Silence!

[*Opens his robe and shows his black velvet pourpoint, with the letter C.D.X. embroidered in silver.* REGINELLA *looks in terror.*

And learn from me, if any one by word
Or sign divulge the secret presence here
Of one of us, he dies ere close of day;
You know 't is so.

REGINELLA.

Good Lord! By what door came he
In here?

HOMODEI.

By none. Answer my questions truly:
Your life depends on it. Where leads this door?

REGINELLA.

To my lord's bedchamber.

HOMODEI.

And this one?

REGINELLA.

That!
The private staircase to the galleries,
Of which my lord himself keeps the sole key.

HOMODEI.

And this again?

REGINELLA.

My lady's oratory.

HOMODEI.

Is there an issue from that oratory?

REGINELLA.

None. 'T is the tower, with casement iron-barr'd.

HOMODEI (*going to window*).

About the height of this? Twenty-four feet
Of straight descent, the Brenta at the base.

Bars needless. Is there not a staircase from
The oratory? Whither doth it lead?

REGINELLA.

To Dafne's chamber and to mine, my lord.

HOMODEI.

Any outlet from that chamber?

REGINELLA.

None, my lord;
Again an iron-barr'd window, but no door.

HOMODEI.

Well, when your mistress enters, you 'll at once
Go to your room, and neither speak nor listen.
Dost hear?

REGINELLA.

I will obey.

HOMODEI.

Where is thy mistress?

REGINELLA.

In the oratory, kneeling and in prayer.

HOMODEI.

After which she 'll come here?

REGINELLA.

She will, my lord.

HOMODEI.

But not for half an hour?

REGINELLA.

No, my lord.

HOMODEI.

'T is well. Leave me, and silence. With what happens
You 've nought to do. A cat plays with a mouse;
'T is not your business. You have never seen me;
I do not even exist. You understand?
Speak but a word, I hear it. Let your eye
Give sign, I see 't; a pressure of the hand,
A gesture, and I know it. Now depart.

REGINELLA (*half aside*).

O Lord above! who is 't must die to-night?

HOMODEI.

You, if you speak.

[*At a sign from* HOMODEI *she goes out by the door near the prie-dieu.* HOMODEI *then approaches the wardrobe, which turns again and shows a dark passage.*

Now, signor, you may enter.
Nine steps to mount. Come in.

SCENE II.

HOMODEI; RODOLFO, *wrapped in a mantle.*

RODOLFO.

Where am I, say?

HOMODEI.

Perhaps upon the platform of your scaffold.

RODOLFO.

What mean you?

HOMODEI.

Has it never yet been told you?
In Padua is a formidable chamber,
Bright with gay flowers and perfumes, perhaps with love,
Yet where no man whatever, young or old,
Peasant or prince, dare penetrate; of which,
Even to touch the handle of a door,
Were crime punished with death.

RODOLFO.

I've heard;—you mean
The chamber of the wife of the Podesta.

HOMODEI.

The same.

RODOLFO.

Well, and that chamber?

HOMODEI.

You are in it.

RODOLFO.

What! In *her* chamber?

HOMODEI.

Ay.

RODOLFO.

Then she I love—

HOMODEI.

Is Catarina Bragadini, wife
To Malipieri, Padua's Podesta!

RODOLFO.

Is 't possible! The wife of the Podesta!

HOMODEI.

If you feel terror — go. The door is open;
You yet may fly.

RODOLFO.

Fear for myself? No; but
For her I love. How know I, I may trust you?

HOMODEI.

I 'll tell you how. 'T is now eight days ago,
When late at night you passed across the square
Of San Prodocimo; you were alone.
You heard a noise, cries, and the click of swords,
Close by the church; you hasten'd —

RODOLFO.

Yes, and rescued
From the hands of three assassins, a masked man.

HOMODEI.

The man left you without a word of thanks. —
That mask'd man was myself; well, since that night
I have wish'd well to the Lord Ezzelino.
You know me not. I know you, and have labour'd
To bring you near the woman whom you love;
'T is gratitude, no more. Now will you trust me?

RODOLFO.

Yes, thanks; implicitly. I own I feared
Some treachery towards her. I felt a weight
Upon my heart; 't is gone. You are my friend.
You have, for me, done more than I for you.

Apart from her I could no longer live;
I should have died or done some damned act.
'T is not my life alone, 't is heart and soul
Thou 'st saved.

HOMODEI.

So you determine to remain?

RODOLFO.

Remain! I 'm here; and I have said I trust you.
To see her once again, an hour, a minute!
'T is strange to you, this craving of the heart?
Where is she?

HOMODEI.

Praying in her oratory.

RODOLFO.

Where shall I see her?

HOMODEI.

Here.

RODOLFO.

When?

HOMODEI.

In ten minutes.

RODOLFO.

Oh, God! The joy!

HOMODEI.

Yet listen. At that end
Is the Podesta's chamber. There he sleeps
Even now. Excepting us, and your Catarina,
There 's no one now awake within the palace.
I think to-night you 're safe. As for the entrance
Which served our turn, that secret must be mine;

Save *me*, 't is known to none; but at the dawn
You can escape with ease. There lies the husband.
[*Pointing to the door.*
As for *you*, Lord Rodolfo, *you* the lover,
I would advise you not to use this window;
You see the height, — and down below the river.
[*Looking down.*
I leave you.

RODOLFO.

In ten minutes, did you say?

HOMODEI.

Yes.

RODOLFO.

Will she come alone?

HOMODEI.

Possibly not;
Stand you aside at first.

RODOLFO.

Where?

HOMODEI.

Here, behind
This bed; — or, stay, the balcony. Come forth
When you judge proper. Hear you that? The chairs
Are being moved within the oratory.
Your Catarina comes; I must depart.

RODOLFO.

Whoe'er you be, henceforth you may dispose
Of me and mine; my wealth, my strength, my life.
[RODOLFO *disappears on balcony.*

HOMODEI (*coming forward*).

Lord Ezzelino, she will ne'er be thine.

[*He watches to see if he is observed, then takes from his breast a letter which he places on the table, then goes through the secret passage, which he closes after him.* CATARINA *and* DAFNE *enter from the oratory.* CATARINA *in the costume of a lady of rank.*

SCENE III.

CATARINA; DAFNE; RODOLFO, *hidden.*

CATARINA.

More than a month, Dafne, — more than a month!
All then is ended! Oh, could I but sleep
And see him in my dreams! — I cannot sleep.
Say, where is Reginella?

DAFNE.

In her chamber,
Sleeping or praying. Shall I send for her,
That she may wait on you?

CATARINA.

No. Let her wait
On God, and pray. Useless seem prayers to me!

DAFNE.

Would you I closed this window, madame?

CATARINA.

Dafne,
You little know my sufferings; now five weeks,

Five lingering weeks, since I set eyes on him.—
No, do not close that window. My head burns;
It cools my brow.— I ne'er shall see him more!
Guarded! Shut in! A prisoner! All is finished.
To seek me here were death! I would not see him.
I fear lest he should make some mad attempt.
God! was it then so great a sin to love him?
Why ever came he here to Padua?
Why did I yield to a false happiness
So quickly ended? Oh, what joy was it,
From time to time to see him for an hour, —
That hour so short, 't was ended ere begun.
Yet 't was the only loophole whence to glean
The little air and sun that gave me life.
That glorious presence which brought day to me,
Is gone forever! Dafne, tell me truly,
Dost think I ne'er shall see that face again?

DAFNE.

Madame!

CATARINA.

I know I 'm unlike other women;
Little I care for pleasures or distractions.
For seven years I 've lived upon one thought,
My heart upon one feeling, — love; one name, —
Rodolfo! If I look within, what see I?
Rodolfo! Nothing but Rodolfo there!
I am made in his image, — only his;
The mirror of my soul reflects no other.
It had been otherwise impossible,
This life of mine! Seven years. I was young then!
How without pity do they marry us!
My husband! Do I dare to speak to him?
Is that a happy life, a true position?
Alas! Had I a mother!

DAFNE.

Pray, dear madame,
Leave these sad thoughts.

CATARINA.

Dafne, on nights like this
What sweet hours have we passed! And is it wrong
To think and say these things? It cannot be.
Yet if my griefs afflict you, leave me, Dafne;
Go and take rest, and send me Reginella.

DAFNE.

But Madame will require —

CATARINA.

No, I 'll undress
Alone. Get thee to bed, good Dafne, and sleep well.

DAFNE.

May th' angels, madame, watch o'er you to-night.

[DAFNE *leaves by the oratory door.*

SCENE IV.

CATARINA; RODOLFO *on balcony.*

CATARINA (*in a reverie*).

That song he used to sing, lying at my feet, —
I 'd give my life to see him there once more,
To hear again those words that stirred my soul.

[*Takes her guitar.*

This was the air, I think.

[*She plays some bars of melancholy music.*

As for the words!
Oh, I would pawn my soul to hear him sing them,
E'en if I saw him not; ay, far away,
So I could catch his voice, — that thrilling voice!

RODOLFO (*from balcony, sings as follows*).

My soul unto thy heart is given:
In mystic fold do they entwine;
So bound in one, that were they riven
Apart, my soul would life resign.
Thou art my song, and I the lyre;
Thou art the breeze, and I the briar;
The altar I, and thou the fire;
Mine the deep love, the beauty thine!

CATARINA (*letting fall her guitar*).

Heaven!

RODOLFO (*continues*).

As fleets away
The rapid hour
While weeping, may
My sorrowing lay
Touch thee, sweet flower.

CATARINA.

Rodolf!

[RODOLFO *appears from balcony, and throws off his mantle.*

RODOLFO.

Catarina!

CATARINA.

Can it be?
You in this room! I die with joy and fear!
Oh, guess you where you are? Do you not know
This chamber you dare enter is like no other?
No, loved Rodolfo; here you risk your head!

RODOLFO.

What matter, when I know that without you
I must have died. 'T is happier to die here.

CATARINA.

Then you 've done well; yes, you were right to come.
I see you, and we can but die together.
One hour with thee, then let the earth fall on us.

RODOLFO.

God may protect us; all is here asleep.
Since thus I 've entered, cannot I go forth?

CATARINA.

And how *was* that?

RODOLFO.

'T was one whose life I had saved.
I can't explain it, — but the means are sure.

CATARINA.

Oh, in such case, if all be sure, Rodolfo,
I am content. But let me look upon thee.

RODOLFO.

And on thee, Catarina!

CATARINA.

We 'll not dream
Of any but ourselves; I 'll think of you,
While you — Ah! true, I 'm changed; *why*, you well know.
For five long weeks I have done nought but weep!
And how with thee? Hast thou been very sad?
Hast felt this parting deeply? Tell me, love;
I long to hear thee speak.

RODOLFO.

Oh, Catarina!
To look and not to see thee, 't was as though
Mine eyes were seared, my heart an aching void;
'T was daily to feel dying inch by inch;
'T was as a dreary dungeon without lamp;
A starless night; a sleep that nothing dreamt
Nor thought nor knew! What have I done, you ask?
I cannot tell; what I felt — now you know.

CATARINA.

And so with me, — and so with me; ay, Rodolf,
So has it been with me, — our hearts as one.
What have I not to tell! but where begin?
I am in prison here; I cannot stir.
Thou must not wonder that I did not leap
And hang upon thy neck, and smother thee
At the first moment, — it bewilder'd me!
And when I heard thy voice, 't was as if heaven
Had open'd, — that I knew not where I was!
Now sit thee in thy place, as formerly, —
Only speak low. You 'll stay here till the dawn;
Dafne will let you out. What luscious hours
Are those whose flavour takes away all fear!
Thy presence strengthens, gives seraphic joy!
'Twixt thee and Paradise, I should choose thee!
Thank Dafne for her care of me, and ask her
How I have wept; thank Reginella too.
But tell me first, how learnt you who I am?
Yet nothing baffles you. You will a thing,
And dare th' impossible to compass it!
Have you safe means of entering here again?

RODOLFO.

Could I live otherwise? Oh, Catarina!
As I drink in your words, they are like honey;

Fear nothing! See how calm and bright the night!
Within us love, and all around repose;
Two souls expanding in each other's warmth
With sympathetic growth. A love so pure
Bright angels would not trouble. I love thee,
Thou lovest me, and Heaven above keeps watch;
All else is sleeping! What, then, should we fear?

CATARINA

True, there are states in which no fear can live. —
All to each other! Parting is *our* death;
We dread none else! For what am I, alone?
A poor chained woman; thou, a banish'd man!
United, we may make the angels envy.
Yet, no; in heaven they 're not like us, Rodolfo. —
Could mortals die of joy, we now were dead!
How my head rambles; I 've said a thousand things,
Yet cannot I recall a word I 've uttered;
Can *you* remember? Is 't not all a dream?
And are we really here?

RODOLFO.

Dear, happy saint!

CATARINA.

Now, do not speak; let me collect my thoughts.
Let me regard thee silently, my love,
And dream that thou art there. Then will I talk.
Yes, there are moments thus, when we would look, —
Look at the man we love, and say, " Be silent;
I 'm feeding on you, — silence! I 'm loving you;
Be silent still; I 'm happy!"

[*He kisses her hand; she turns, and sees the letter lying on the table.*

What is this?

Oh, God! A paper! It alarms me, Rodolf!
Awakes me from my dream! — Rodolfo, say,
Placed you that letter there?

RODOLFO.

No; but the man,
Perhaps, who came with me —

CATARINA.

Came there a man
With you? What man? What can this letter mean?
[*She opens letter hurriedly, and reads.*
"Some weak-brained men get drunk on Cyprus wine;
Some revel more in vengeance. A poor spy
In love is puny; in revenge he's great!"

RODOLFO.

Good heaven! What can that mean?

CATARINA.

I know the hand.
The wretch who dared to raise his eyes to me,
To tell me that he loved; to force his way,
In Venice, to my home; who was thrust forth!
His name is Homodei.

RODOLFO.

The fiend!

CATARINA.

A trusted
Spy to the Council of Ten.

RODOLFO.

That fearful Council!

CATARINA.

Caught in the toils and taken! We are lost!
[*She goes to balcony and looks out.*
See there!

RODOLFO.

What is 't?

CATARINA.

Blow out the sconces quickly!

RODOLFO (*extinguishing the lights*).

What have you seen?

CATARINA.

The gallery by the Molino bridge!

RODOLFO.

Well?

CATARINA.

Lights that shine, then disappear, then shine.

RODOLFO.

Weak fool that I have been! Oh, Catarina,
'T is I have caused thy death!

CATARINA.

Dearest Rodolfo,
I should have come to you as you to me.
[*Listening at little door at the end.*
Hark! Hear you not sounds in the corridor!
A door is opened; now the tread of feet;
How got you in, Rodolfo?

RODOLFO.

By a masked entrance
That demon has reclosed.

CATARINA.

How act?

RODOLFO.

That door?

CATARINA.

Leads to my husband's room.

RODOLFO.

The window then?

CATARINA.

'T is an abyss!

RODOLFO.

This door?

CATARINA.

My oratory!
Whence there is no escape, no hope of flight;
Yet enter it. I 'll double lock the door.
[*Opens door;* RODOLFO *enters. She closes and locks the door, takes the key and hides it in her breast.*
Who knows what may arise? He might rush out
To give me aid, and would himself be murder'd.
[*She goes to small door at the end.*
Now I hear nothing. Yes, they move again;
They stop, — to listen, doubtless. Oh, my God!
There is no other course but to feign sleep.
[*Takes off her outer robe, and throws herself on the bed.*
I tremble like a leaf. Now in the lock
A key is turned! I dare not see who enters.
[*Closes bed-curtains. The door opens.*

SCENE V.

CATARINA, LA TISBE.

[LA TISBE *enters. She is very pale, a lamp in her hand. She moves with cautious steps, looking around her; reaches the table, examines the candles which have been extinguished.*

LA TISBE.

The light but just blown out!

[*Turns and sees the bed, hastens to it and draws the curtain aside.*

She is alone!

That sleep's pretence!

[*She makes the tour of the room, examines doors and walls.*

This is the husband's door.

[*She then strikes against the oratory door, which is concealed by the tapestry.*

Another door here too!

[CATARINA *raises herself in the bed and observes* TISBE, *with a feeling of stupefaction.*

CATARINA.

What can this mean?

LA TISBE.

What can it mean? I 'll tell you. 'T is the mistress
Of the Podesta, who holds within her grasp
That same Podesta's wife.

CATARINA.

Oh, Heaven!

LA TISBE.

It means
That a comedian, a child of the stage,
A *baladine*, as you great dames miscall her,
Holds at her mercy a grandee of Venice,
A married virtue, a respected wife, —
Holds tight within her claws, within her teeth,
This spotless fame, to do with 't as she wills;
This golden reputation to tear piecemeal,
Gnaw it in shreds, and cast it to the winds!
Ha! ha! Proud madame, I know not all may happen,
But this I know, for this is sure, — I hold
One of this pamper'd race beneath my foot,
To trample on at pleasure; nor will I
Loose that firm hold; and be you well assured
It had been better for you had Heav'n's thunder
Crash'd o'er your head than to have seen my visage.
You 're brave to dare to raise your eyes to mine,
The while your smuggled lover watches us.

CATARINA.

Madame!

LA TISBE.

Ay, smuggled!

CATARINA.

You have been deceived.

LA TISBE.

I 'm not deceived by you! 'T was there he sat, —
Your places are declared by those two seats.
Had you been shrewd, you would have shifted them.
What might those chairs disclose of plighted fondness,
Of passionate clingings; tender, glowing vows!
"I love thee! Worship thee! I 'm thine, alone!"
Nay, come not near me!

CATARINA.

What would you imply?

LA TISBE.

Imply? This: that your worth 's no more than ours;
That what we say aloud in open day,
You whisper shamelessly in th' ear of night.
The hour alone is changed. We take your husbands,
You rob us of our lovers! 'T is a challenge;
Then clear th' arena. Let us see who wins.
You things of forms, shams, and hypocrisies,
Soiled virtues, tinsel, traitors to your homes —
Worth more! By Heaven, you are not worth our value!
We deceive none; 't is you who cheat the world,
Cozen your husbands, blind your families,
And if you could, would circumvent th' Almighty!
See these veiled virtues, sweeping through the streets,
To seek the church, bend, cross themselves, and pray, —
Mummers! Nor bend, nor pray, nor cross yourselves;
Tear off the veil, — behind it is a mask;
Tear off the mask, and what behind? Lying lips!
Now hear the truth: I 'm the Podesta's mistress,
You are his wife! On one must ruin fall!

CATARINA.

Oh, God! you would —

LA TISBE.

Where is *he?*

CATARINA.

Who?

LA TISBE.

This man.

CATARINA.

I am alone here, madame, as you see.
I do not understand your menaces;
I know you not, and yet you chill my heart, —
Curdle my blood with terror. Against you,
What have I done? In this, what purpose have you?

LA TISBE.

You ask my purpose? Be you sure I have one.
You virtuous wives may well excite our wonder!
Should I be here, did not rage tear my vitals?
What is 't to me that you are the grand lady,
And I the actress? Does 't make my beauty less?
I have no need for envy, but I hate you!
Hate you, and scorn you, from my inmost heart!
Where is this man? His name? Let him stand forth
And meet my gaze whilst you affect to sleep, —
Ay, as you did but now, infamous trickster!

CATARINA.

O God! My God! Where must this end? Oh, Heaven!
Oh, madame, if you knew —

LA TISBE.

What I know is,
Behind this hidden door *he* hears our words.

CATARINA.

That is no other than my oratory;
Believe me, there is nobody concealed.
Some one has cheated you, and slander'd me.
See, here I live retired and isolated.

LA TISBE.

The veil!

CATARINA.

You 'll only find my breviary,
My prie-dieu there within.

LA TISBE.

The mask!

CATARINA.

Will you
Not credit me, if I declare to you
No one is hidden there?

LA TISBE.

The lying lips!

CATARINA.

Hear me!

LA TISBE.

Why, you must be distraught to assume
This pitiful air of guiltiness and fear;
Either speak truth or lie with more assurance.
Courage! Rise up against me, show your anger,
Defend indignantly your innocence!

[*Suddenly she sees the mantle near the balcony, runs, and snatches it up.*

But that 's no longer possible! Behold!

CATARINA.

Oh, heavens!

LA TISBE.

What 's this? 'T is surely not a mantle?
Not a man's mantle? But unhappily,
I cannot tell to whom it may belong,
One is so like another. Be truthful, madame,
And give me the man's name.

CATARINA.

I cannot tell.

LA TISBE.

That is your oratory; open it.

CATARINA.

Wherefore?

LA TISBE.

I wish to pray as well as you.

Open it.

CATARINA.

I have no key.

LA TISBE.

Open, I say!

CATARINA.

I know not where it is.

LA TISBE.

Your husband, then!

Angelo! Signor Angelo! My lord!

[TISBE *runs to the door at the end;* CATARINA *throws herself before to stop her.*

CATARINA.

You shall not enter there. I will not have it.
What have I done to you? What is your thought
'Gainst me? Have pity! Why would you injure me?
One moment, — I'll explain; you shall know all.
One moment only! Since you have been here,
I am unsettled, frighten'd by your words;
My mind is troubled and my brain confused.

You say you 're a comedian, I a lady, —
What more? I swear to you there is no one there.
What of that sbirro? You speak not of him,
And yet I know he is the cause of all.
You must have seen him, talked with him, — that man
Of mystery and crime, who lives by cheating.
Would you believe a spy? One instant, listen!
Women are not so hard on one another;
A man I do not say would be so kind.
Have mercy! You 're too lovely to be cruel!
'T is as I said, — that wicked man, that spy —
Would you not suffer if you caused my death?
My husband — Do not wake him: he is hard;
Kill me, he would. Oh, knew you my position,
You 'd pity me; I am not culpable,
Not really culpable, — indeed I am not.
I may have been imprudent, — nothing more.
What mother's guidance have I ever had?
Oh, pity me, and go not to that door,
I pray, — I do beseech!

LA TISBE.

All words are useless.
Nothing will bend me. Quick! My lord! my lord!

CATARINA.

Nay, pause! You know I 've told you he will kill me.
Leave me the time to pray. Oh, my God! Hear me!
I will not quit this room; see, I will kneel,
Here, — here, before this crucifix, — for mercy.
[*Pointing to crucifix of copper above the prie-dieu.*
TISBE'S *eyes fix themselves on the crucifix.*
Kneel here and pray with me. Then if you wish
My death, if God still leaves that dreadful thought
Within your heart, then do your will upon me.

LA TISBE.

[*Rushing to crucifix, and tearing it from the wall.*
What is this crucifix? Where got you it?
How came it here? Speak, speak! Who gave it you?

CATARINA.

That crucifix? Do you not see I 'm crush'd?
Why with perplexing questions trouble me?

LA TISBE.

How comes this crucifix in your possession?
Speak quickly! Will you never answer me?

[*The candle is still alight near the balcony.* TISBE *approaches it and examines the crucifix.* CATARINA *follows.*

CATARINA.

That cross? 'T was an old woman; there 's a name,
You see, upon the base, — "Tisbe," I think.
'T was a poor woman whom they would have hung;
I pleaded for her life, — begged to my father;
He granted it. 'T was here in Padua;
I then was but a child! Oh, pity, madame;
Let me not die. That woman gave it me.
She said 't would bring me happiness. — That 's all.
There was no more, — I swear there was no more.
What evil in all that? Why question me?
See, I 'm exhausted unto death!

LA TISBE.

Loved mother!
How strange all this!

[*The door at the end opens.* ANGELO *appears in a dressing-gown, or night-robe.*

CATARINA.

My husband! Then I 'm lost!

SCENE VI.

CATARINA, LA TISBE, ANGELO.

ANGELO (*without seeing* TISBE, *who remains near balcony*).
What mean these voices that I hear?

CATARINA.

My lord!

ANGELO.

How is't you are not sleeping at this hour?

CATARINA.

'T is that —

ANGELO.

Why trembling thus? There 's some one with you.

LA TISBE.

There is, my lord; 't is I.

ANGELO.

You, Tisbe!

LA TISBE.

I.

ANGELO.

You here, and in the middle of the night!
Why here? Why at this hour? And my wife —

LA TISBE.

In trepidation. I will tell you; listen!
The matter 's worthy your attentive ear.

CATARINA.

All 's ended! Death glares at me!

LA TISBE.

In two words,
You were to have been murder'd in the morning.

ANGELO.

Murder'd!

LA TISBE.

While passing hence unto my palace;
You know your practice is to go alone.
The news reached me but now; and in all haste
I sought your wife, that she by some device
Might hold you safe indoors. Now you know why
I came at night, and why your wife is trembling.

CATARINA.

Great God! What is this woman's purpose, then?

ANGELO.

I cannot feel surprise. Now you perceive
I had good reason when I spoke of dangers;
They 're ever round me. But whence came the caution?

LA TISBE.

From one who, ere he told me, made me promise
He should not be detained. I kept my word.

ANGELO.

'T was wrong. Such promises are never kept.
How enter'd you the palace?

LA TISBE.

Again this stranger.
At the Molino bridge a little door
Was open'd by him, and admitted me.

ANGELO.

'T is as I told you. And to reach this room ?

LA TISBE.

I used the key you yourself gave ; 't is here.

ANGELO.

How knew you that it open'd to this chamber ?

LA TISBE.

You told me so yourself.

ANGELO.

Whose is this mantle ?

LA TISBE.

The man had placed it on me for disguise,
Ent'ring the palace. He gave me, too, a hat ;
I must have let it fall.

ANGELO.

That men can enter
These walls without my knowledge ! That is the life
I 'm doom'd to lead, — one corner of my robe
Ever in these men's grasp ! Now tell me, Tisbe —

LA TISBE.

My lord, leave further question till to-morrow,
I pray you. For the nonce, we have saved your life, —
Madame and I, — yet not one word of thanks !

ANGELO.

Your pardon, Tisbe.

LA TISBE.

Below, my litter waits me ;
Escort me, pray. Let your wife take her rest.

ANGELO.

I'm at your orders, Tisbe. We will pass
Through my apartment; I would take my sword.
[*Going to large door.*
Hola! Lights there!

LA TISBE (*taking* CATARINA *apart*).

Let him escape at once!
The door by which I enter'd! Take this key.
[*Gives her the key, and then turns to the oratory.*
Oh, could I force that door! The pangs I suffer!
My doubts still unresolved!

ANGELO.

I await you, madame.

LA TISBE.

Could I but see him pass! There are no means.
And I must leave, tortured, unsatisfied!
My lord, your hand.
[ANGELO *and* LA TISBE *go out.*

CATARINA.

Oh, God! Is this a dream?
[CATARINA *falls down exhausted.*

ACT III.

THIRD DAY. — Part I.

Scene. — Catarina's *chamber as before. The curtains surrounding the bed are closed.*

SCENE I.

Angelo, The Dean, *and* The Patriarch *of* St. Antonio.

ANGELO (*to the* Dean).

Most reverend dean of St. Antonio
Of Padua, forthwith you 'll drape the nave,
Choir, and high altar of your church with black,
And in two hours — two hours — you will perform
A solemn service for the soul's repose
Of one of lofty birth, who at that moment
Will have expired. Uncovered let the shrine
Be of your patron saint. You will assist
With all the chapter at this solemn service;
You 'll light three hundred candles of white wax,
As is the custom for a royal queen.
Six hundred of the poor you will assemble,
Each to receive a silver ducat and
A golden sequin. On the sable hangings
Be placed no ornament, beyond the arms
Of Malipieri and of Bragadini.
The Malipieri blazonry you know;
The escutcheon *or*, bearing the eagle's talon.
The Bragadini scutcheon bears, per pale,
Azure and *argent*, charged with a cross *gules*.

DEAN.

Magnifico Podesta!

ANGELO.

Now forthwith
You will, with all your clergy, cross and banner
Paraded at their head, descend below,
Into this palace crypt, where lie the tombs
Of the Romano princes. You will find
One slab removed, where a new grave is dug;
Bless that grave. Be not tardy. Pray for me.

DEAN.

It should be then one of your lordship's blood?

ANGELO.

Enough!

[*The* DEAN *bows profoundly, and goes out by the bottom door; the* PATRIARCH *prepares to follow.*

ANGELO (*stopping him*).

Stay, Reverend Patriarch. Within
That oratory is one you must confess.

PATRIARCH.

A man condemned, my lord?

ANGELO.

No, Priest, — a woman.

PATRIARCH.

Whom you would have me now prepare for death?

ANGELO.

Yes; I will bring you to her.

USHER (*entering*).

Your Excellence
Has asked for Donna Tisbe. She is here.

ANGELO.

Let her come in and wait me in this chamber.
[*The* USHER *goes out. The* PODESTA *opens the oratory and signs to the* PATRIARCH *to enter; upon the threshold he stops.*
Now, Patriarch, as you would value life,
On leaving this, remember, none must learn
The name of her you are about to see.

[ANGELO *enters the oratory with the* PATRIARCH. *The door at the end opens and the* USHER *introduces* LA TISBE.

LA TISBE (*to the* USHER).

Know you what he would with me?

USHER.

No, madame.
[*He goes out.*

SCENE II.

LA TISBE (*alone*).

Again this chamber! What can be his object?
An air of mystery pervades the palace.
It matters not. I would give my life to know
The secret hidden last night by that door.
How strange it looks by day. The *man* was there!
What man? Who was *there* hidden? Was it *he?*
Can I be sure? The spy has disappeared.
Oh, this uncertainty! The direful phantom

That troubles thus my rest; that glares at me
With dubious look, neither of smile nor frown!
Oh, were I sure it was Rodolfo, — sure,
With full proof, — I would crush, denounce, destroy him!
No, I would not; I 'd have revenge on her.
No, I would kill myself. Once sure Rodolfo
Deceived me, loved me not, — nay, loved another, —
What then were life to me? Nought! I would die.
What! without vengeance? And why not? Ah me!
I say that now; but had I the clear proof,
I might be capable of amplest vengeance!
Can I say what would stir within my soul?
Once it were proved that — last night — Rodolf — Oh,
Preserve me, Heaven, from what my rage might do!
Rodolfo — Catarina — side by side!
Demons! How should I act? Whom should I kill?
Them — or — myself? I know not.

[ANGELO *re-enters.*

SCENE III.

LA TISBE, ANGELO.

LA TISBE.

You sent for me?

ANGELO.

Yes; I must tell you all without reserve.
Grave matters, Tisbe. As I told you once,
Each day a treason, every hour a snare,
A poniard to avert, or axe to wield!
In two words: It is proved she has a lover!

LA TISBE.

Who 's named —

ANGELO.

Who was here yesternight, when we
Were here.

LA TISBE.

Who 's named —

ANGELO.

Thus was the thing discovered:
A man, — the Venice Council's spy (and you
Should know, these spies aposted by the Ten,
Hold, with respect to all who are Podestas,
A singular position. They 're forbidden,
On penalty of death, to write to us,
Or to hold converse with us, till the day
When it may be their duty to arrest us), —
One of these spies was poniarded this morning
Near the Altina bridge; on the stream's bank
The night-watch found his body, and removed it.
Was it a duel or an ambush? None
Can say. The dying sbirro could but utter
Two or three feeble words ere he expired.
'T is pity that he died; for when attacked,
He managed to conceal about his person
An intercepted letter, which the night-watch,
Upon his bidding, brought me. 'T was a letter
Address'd to Catarina — by a lover!

LA TISBE.

Who 's named —

ANGELO.

The letter was not signed. You ask
His name? That is the point that troubles me.
The dying man told the night-watch the name.
The fools have not remember'd, nor can they
Agree even in their guesses; for one says
'T is Roderigo, t' other 't is Pandolfo.

LA TISBE.

Have you the letter?

ANGELO.

'T was to show you that,
I sent for you. You 'll tell me if perchance
You recognize the hand. [*Draws forth the letter.*

LA TISBE.

Be quick! Oh, give it!

ANGELO (*in his excitement crushing the letter in his hands*).

You understand how this disturbs my mind.
This man has dared to raise his eyes upon
A Malipieri's wife; has dared to stain,
Upon its brightest page, the Golden Book
Of Venice, that where *my* name is inscribed, —
The name of Malipieri. This past night
The man was in this chamber, standing, say,
Where I now stand, — the wretch who wrote this letter!
And yet I know not how to seize this man.
I cannot swoop my vengeance down upon him
For this affront; I cannot make him shed
His heart's blood on the floor he has defiled.
Oh, I would offer up my father's sword,
This good right hand, ten years of my own life,
To know where he exists!

LA TISBE.

Give me the letter.

ANGELO.

Take it.

[*Allows her to take it from him.*

LA TISBE (*aside*).

It is Rodolfo!

ANGELO.

Know you the hand?

LA TISBE.

Give me but time.

[*Reads.*] "My dearest Catarina,
You see, my well-belov'd, how God protects us.
Saved from your husband by a miracle,
And from that woman —"

[*Apart.*] What! that *woman*, eh?
"How, Catarina, I adore thee! Thou 'rt
The only being whom I ever loved.
Fear nothing; I 'm in safety."

ANGELO.

Do you know
The writing?

LA TISBE.

No, my lord.

ANGELO.

You know it not?
What say you of the writer? He cannot be
One just arrived in Padua? 'T is the tone
Of an old love. I 'll search in every hole
And corner of the town, but I will find
This man. Say, what advise you, Tisbe?

LA TISBE.

Search.

ANGELO.

I 've order given that save yourself and brother
No one may freely enter in the palace;
All others will be seized and brought before me;
Myself will question them. Meanwhile I hold

One half my vengeance safe within my grasp,
And I will glut it.

LA TISBE.

How?

ANGELO.

My wife shall die.

LA TISBE.

Your wife!

ANGELO.

All is prepared; within an hour
Catarina Bragadini 'll be beheaded,
As it behooves.

LA TISBE.

Beheaded!

ANGELO.

In this chamber.

LA TISBE.

Good God! Beheaded! In this chamber!

ANGELO.

Listen!

My bed, once desecrate, becomes a tomb.
It is decreed this woman dies. 'T was settled
Too calmly to admit of a reversal, —
No passion in 't, to be subdued by prayers;
No intercession of a friend could change me.
Had I such friend, he 'd be my friend no more.
I hate this woman, Tisbe. If I married,
'T was that my uncle, Bishop of Castello,
For reasons that in families hold good,
Commanded it, and my affairs were urgent.
A wife who wore a face that ever chilled me,

Who never bore me offspring — But enough!
Hatred is in our blood, in our traditions.
That day the lion of St. Mark shall fly
From off his column, hate may plume her wings
Of bronze and leave the heart of Malipieri.
My grandsire hated the great Marquis Azzo,
And in the wells of Venice plunged his foe;
My father hated Procurator Badoer,
And poison'd him at Queen Cornaro's festal.
She is my hatred; yet I had not harmed her
Had she been innocent. 'T is her own affair;
She will be punish'd. Pardon for my wife!
No! Could my mother's bones rise from their grave
And plead for her, those bones would plead in vain.

LA TISBE.

And will the gracious Signory of Venice
Allow this?

ANGELO.

All to punish, nought for pardon.

LA TISBE.

But your wife's family, — the Bragadini?

ANGELO.

Will give me thanks.

LA TISBE.

Then all is said; she dies!
You may be just, — yet pause; for all so far
Is secret, and no name declared. Could not
A hideous punishment — a blood-stain on
Your palace — now be spared, with public rumours
And witnesses? A headsman is a witness,
And one too many.

ANGELO.

Poison would be better, —
Swift poison! I have none. Think you that strange?

LA TISBE.

I have some.

ANGELO.

Where? What poison?

LA TISBE.

The Malaspina.
You know the casket sent me from St. Mark's?

ANGELO.

The one you told me of? Rapid and sure
The poison it contained. Yes, you are right.
We 'll call none in to help; that will be best.
Tisbe, my confidence is fixed in you.
What I am forced to do is just and legal;
It is my honour that I would avenge.
Yet 't is a dark and dangerous step I take;
I have no friend but you, — I trust none else.
'T is alike best for her and me to be
Secret and prompt in this. Of you I 've need;
May I rely upon your help?

LA TISBE.

You may.

ANGELO.

No one must know how she has disappeared,
Nor why. Grave dug, dirge chanted; but for whom?
No one can tell. The night-watch who are here
Will bear away the corse and bury it;
A cloud must rest o'er all. Send for the poison

LA TISBE.

None else can find it; I must go myself.

ANGELO.

Go! I'll await you. [TISBE *goes out.*

It is better thus.
Darkness and mystery waited on the crime;
'T is right they should attend the expiation.

[*The door of the oratory opens. The* PATRIARCH *enters with lowered eyes, his arms crossed on his breast, passes along the chamber slowly. At the moment he is leaving by the door at the end,* ANGELO *turns towards him.*

She is prepared?

PATRIARCH.

She is, my lord.

[*He goes out;* CATARINA *appears at door of oratory.*

SCENE IV.

ANGELO, CATARINA.

CATARINA.

Prepared!
For what?

ANGELO.

For death.

CATARINA.

For death! Then this is true
No, 't is impossible! I'll not admit
Such thought a moment. Die! I'm *not* prepared;
I tell you I am not prepared, my lord.

ANGELO.

What time do you desire for preparation?

CATARINA.

I cannot tell. A life — abiding years!

ANGELO.

Do you want courage, madame?

CATARINA.

Die at once —
Like that! I, who have nothing done that merits
Death. Oh, my lord, *one* day! — no, not *one* day
For I shall be no more prepared than now.
Give me my life! The cloister! Surely then
It will be possible to leave me life.

ANGELO.

Well, I will grant you life on one condition;
I 've told you what.

CATARINA.

Indeed! I have forgotten.

ANGELO.

Who wrote this letter? Tell me! Name the man!

CATARINA.

Oh, God!

ANGELO.

Deliver up this man, and you
Shall live. For him the scaffold, and for you
The convent. Say, does that suffice? Decide.

CATARINA.

Oh, Heaven!

ANGELO.

You answer not?

CATARINA.

Yes; yes, I answer.
Oh, Heaven!

ANGELO.

Decide at once.

CATARINA.

Oh, I am so cold!
That chapel! All, all through me — oh, so cold!

ANGELO.

Listen. I would be patient with you, madame;
You have an hour before you, — one short hour
To meditate. No one will enter here;
Reflect. I leave that letter on the table;
Beneath, you 'll write *his* name, and you are saved.
Catarina Bragadini, they are lips
Of marble that now speak. You must there write
Your lover's name — or die. You have the choice.

CATARINA.

Oh, but one day!

ANGELO.

One hour! [*He goes out.*

SCENE V.

CATARINA (*alone; she goes to door*).

He locks the door!

[*She goes to window.*

This casement?

[*Looks out.*

Fearful depth! Oh, gracious God!

[*She falls into chair.*

The thought of death is very terrible,
Coming like this, without a moment's pause
Or hint; so sudden, — one hour of existence!
No more! It is not till these hideous things
Come bodily within our own full life,
We know the horror of them! My very limbs
Seem crushed; scarce can I sit. My bed were better.

[*She rises from the chair.*

Oh, could I get one moment of repose,
One short relief!

[*Goes to the bed, withdraws the curtain, and starts with horror. In the place of the bed is a block covered with black cloth, and lying upon it an axe. She screams.*

Oh! What new horror 's this!

[*Closes the curtains with a convulsive movement.*

I cannot look on it! My God! Oh, Heaven!
'T is meant for me — and I 'm alone with that!

[*She drags herself to the arm-chair.*

It is behind me there! I dare not turn!
Oh, Grace above! I know 't is not a dream.
'T is very real, all that is planned around me.
And *there* the fatal sign, behind the curtain!

[*The small door at the end opens, and* RODOLFO *enters*

CATARINA FINDING THE BLOCK AND AXE.

SCENE VI.

CATARINA, RODOLFO.

CATARINA.

Good Heaven! Rodolf!

RODOLFO (*hastening to her*).

Yes, I 'm here, Catarina,
One instant. You 're alone? What happiness!
But you are pale, and with an air thus troubled —

CATARINA.

Troubled! Of course. Imprudent that you are
To enter here under the light of day!

RODOLFO.

'T was my unrest. I could hold out no longer.

CATARINA.

Restless? And why?

RODOLFO.

I 'll tell you, Catarina,
My well beloved. I am indeed happy
To find you here thus tranquil and alone.

CATARINA.

How did you enter?

RODOLFO.

You gave the key yourself.

CATARINA.

I know. But how got you within the palace?

RODOLFO.

That is precisely what disquiets me.
I entered in too easily; but fear
I shall not leave with equal readiness.

CATARINA.

How so?

RODOLFO.

The Captain of the Guard assured me
No one could leave the palace before night.

CATARINA.

None before night! No escape possible!

RODOLFO.

Sbirros are posted throughout every passage;
'T is guarded like a prison. By great chance
I gained the gallery, and here I am.
You swear to me that nothing then has happened?

CATARINA.

No, nothing; be assured Rodolfo, — nothing;
All is as usual. Look around, there 's nought
Disturbed within this chamber. But now leave me.
I tremble lest my husband find you here.

RODOLFO.

Be not alarmed, for at the present moment
Your husband is on the Molino bridge,
Questioning those arrested. Catarina,
I have been greatly troubled; for the palace
Does not look stranger than the town itself.
Bands of Venetian archers fill the streets.
I tried to reach the church; 't is draped in black;
The Office for the Dead was being chanted, —
Yet no one knows for whom! Who can it be?

CATARINA.

I know not.

RODOLFO.

And the town seems struck with stupor
Men talk in groups and whisper; all portends
Some secret and some terrible disaster!
It is not here at least, and I am happy;
These rumours reach you not in your seclusion?

CATARINA.

Oh, no!

RODOLFO.

What care I then? Are you recovered
After last night's alarm? 'T was an event
I cannot understand. But Homodei
Will trouble you no more; I've settled that.

CATARINA.

Indeed!

RODOLFO.

He 's dead. There 's something, Catarina,
Upon your mind. What is it? Why so sad?
Something you hide from me. Nay, fear no danger;
They 'll have my life before they can touch thine.

CATARINA.

No, there is nothing. I'm alarmed for thee;
I vow 't is nothing more. I'd have thee safe.

RODOLFO.

What were you doing, when I entered here?

CATARINA.

Be tranquil, my Rodolfo, I was cheerful.
I tried to recollect the song you sang me.
See, here is my guitar.

RODOLFO.

I sent this morning
A line by Reginella. Has my letter
Been intercepted? Did it reach your hand?

CATARINA.

So well, that here it is.

[*She shows him the letter.*

RODOLFO.

One 's always anxious
When one has written.

CATARINA.

All the issues guarded!
No one to leave before the night!

RODOLFO.

Not one;
That is the order.

CATARINA.

Now, having seen me safe,
Spoken with me, you must feel quite assured
That though the town 's disturbed, here we are quiet.
Pray leave me, Rodolf, in the name of Heaven!
Should the Podesta enter! Quick, away!
And since within the palace walls you must
Till eve remain, assume before these sbirros,
If you should meet, an air of ease and calmness.
Try not to shun their presence, — no evasion.
There, let me fasten well your mantle; now
Your hat like that upon your head. And if
Perchance they want to make you write, — some spy,
For instance, who might lay a snare, — refuse;
Some pretext find.

RODOLFO.

But why all this precaution?

CATARINA.

I do not choose that they should see you write;
'T is an idea of mine. Women, you know,
Will sometimes have ideas. Thanks for this visit, —
For giving me the joy of looking on you.
You see I 'm tranquil, lively, and content.
I have thy letter, I have my guitar.
Now leave me quickly; you must go at once.
Stay! I have yet a word.

RODOLFO.

What is 't?

CATARINA.

Rodolfo,
You know that of the favours lovers claim
I 've ne'er accorded aught; you know it well.

RODOLFO.

Too well, my Catarina.

CATARINA.

Then to-day
'T is I who ask of you — one kiss, Rodolfo!

RODOLFO.

Foretaste of heaven! [*Kisses her.*

CATARINA (*apart*).

Which soon to me will open!

RODOLFO.

Oh, joy!

CATARINA.

I 've made you happy?

RODOLFO.

Oh, most blest!

CATARINA.

Now leave me, Rodolf.

RODOLFO.

Thanks!

CATARINA.

Farewell!

RODOLFO.

I love thee!

SCENE VII.

CATARINA (*alone*).

To fly with him! Oh, no! Impossible!
The thought smiled on me, — 't was but for a moment!
That step would be to lose, perchance destroy him.
God grant he may escape! Grant he may leave
Without obstruction or arrest! Why should
Suspicion light on him? Oh, save him, Heaven!
[*She listens at the door of the corridor.*
Still, my beloved, do I hear thy step —
Farther and farther — now 't is gone. Rodolfo,
May angels guard thee! [*Great door opens.*
Heavens!

[ANGELO *and* LA TISBE *enter.*

SCENE VIII.

CATARINA, ANGELO, LA TISBE.

CATARINA (*apart*).

Who is this woman?
My last night's spectre!

ANGELO.

Have you reflected, madame?

CATARINA.

I have, my lord.

ANGELO.

You die, or give me up
The man who wrote that letter. Have you given
This matter your deep thought?

CATARINA.

My lord, I have
Not thought a single moment on the question.

LA TISBE (*apart*).

Good and courageous woman!

[ANGELO *signs to* TISBE, *who gives him a white phial, which he places on the table.*

ANGELO.

In such case
You will drink this.

CATARINA.

'T is poison that you offer?

ANGELO.

It is.

CATARINA.

God, one day you will judge this man.
For him I now ask pardon!

ANGELO.

As you know,
The grand Proveditor Urseōlo, madame, —
One of your ancestors, a Bragadini, —
Punished his wife Marcella this same way
For the like crime.

CATARINA.

The point, my lord, 's not one
Of ancestors, but of your infamy!
Coldly, and like a demon, do you come,
Poison in hand. You ask if I am guilty, —
As men impute guilt. No, I am not guilty!
Yet I 'll not stoop to justify myself.
Soul without truth, you 've no belief in truth!
'T is not the blush of shame, but of contempt,
I feel! You wedded me for wealth. Your love
Was for the Bragadini dues in Venice;
Your tenderest thought was what those dues might yield
Of annual rent. "An hundred thousand ducats,
Say you? 'T is well; then I will take your daughter."
And what has been that wedded life to me?
Without love, jealousy! My home a prison,
Yet no imputed crime! My life, though pure,
Ever suspected; yours, whilst gross and sensuous,
Yet ever free. Ruthless and hard with me;
Great talk about your fathers who were Doges,
To show contempt for mine. Not one kind word.
Such was my happiness! Ay, one *must* suffer
All this to know how woman's lot is cursed!
'T is true, my lord, I loved before I knew you —
Love still! Now kill me if you have the right;

Finish with horror what 's begun with hate.
Happy in the possession of a letter,
A scrap of — pretext! Well then, judge, condemn me;
In secret darkness execute your will.
You have the power; you have the — poison, — coward!
[*To* TISBE.] What think you of this man, madame?

ANGELO.

Take care!

CATARINA (*to* TISBE).

And who are you? What is your purpose here?
You play a noble part! — *his* public mistress.
You 've interest in my death; you are his spy;
Have worked to place your foot upon my head;
You aid him now in this abomination.
Who knows, — 't is you, mayhap, provide the poison!
[*To* ANGELO.] My lord, what think you of this woman?

ANGELO.

Madame!

CATARINA.

In truth, we three belong to a strange world.
Hellish Republic this, where cruel men
Trample thus mercilessly on weak woman,
And cry one to another: "You do well!
Foscari killed his daughter, Loredano
His hapless wife." While at each sick'ning scene
The State looks on with pleasure! In you two,
The epitome of Venice is before me, —
There, Venice despot, and *here*, courtezan!
[*To* TISBE.] If I exceed all bound, madame, 't is your
Own fault. Why do I see you here?

ANGELO (*seizing her arm*).

'T is time this had an end.

CATARINA (*approaches the table to take the phial*).

Then thus I do
Your will, if it must be. No, no, I cannot —
[*She shrinks back.*
It is too dreadful! Think of it again
While there 's yet time. You, in your strength of power,
Reflect. A woman without force, abandon'd;
Without defence of friends or family,
In cold blood done to death, — shamefully poison'd
In a lone corner of her home! Oh, mother!
Mother!

LA TISBE.

Poor creature!

CATARINA.

Ah, you cried, "Poor creature!"
I heard you, madame. It was you who said it;
Do not deny it. You *can* feel pity, then?
Oh, do not stifle it! Let your heart be soften'd.
You see, 't is cowardly assassination!
Can you be party to it? Impossible!
Oh, let me speak to you alone, — recount
My piteous life, — and you shall soften him.
Show him the horror of 't. For if I speak,
He knows what I must say; but your appeal
Might greatly work on him. The word in season,
Forcibly spoke, — without self-interest, —
How often will it bring us back to reason.
Forgive, if lately I was hard upon you.
I swear I never did what was disloyal
Against my husband. You feel that I have not.
For me to tell him so is useless Husbands
Will ne'er believe; yet there 's much truth in woman.
Reproach me not that I lack courage Why
Seek courage in a wife? There is no shame

In women feeling weak. We should then pity!
If that I cry, 't is because death is fearful;
It is our nature!

ANGELO.

My patience is exhausted!

CATARINA.

There, see, he now disturbs me (is 't not so?)
While I am pleading. Was it right? He found
I worked on your compassion. Now he has
Broken through all! I can say nothing more.
[*To* ANGELO.] Oh, ravening monster!

ANGELO.

Listen, Catarina
Bragadini! Crime demands punishment;
An open grave, a corpse; an outraged husband
Demands an expiation! By the God
Above, you waste your breath! [*Pointing to poison.*
Do you consent?

CATARINA.

No, no!

ANGELO.

Then I hark back on my first purpose, —
The swords! The swords, Troilo! Let them be brought!
I 'll go myself!

[ANGELO *goes out in excitement by the door at the end, which is then reclosed from without.*

SCENE IX.

CATARINA, LA TISBE.

LA TISBE.

Quick! do not lose a moment.
For since 't is you he madly loves, 't is you
To whom alone I must devote my thought.
Do what is wished, — it is your only hope.
I can explain no further; you are not
Tractable — wise! Just now when I exclaimed
"Poor creature," you declared it openly,
As though to raise suspicion in your husband!
What folly! I dare tell you nothing, lest
With hasty, hot imprudence, you disclose it.
Be advised: drink, and let things take their course.
Nor axe nor sword will pardon when it strikes.
Resist not counsel. What more dare I say?
'T is you are loved; and 't is my wish that — you,
Or — some one — under deepest obligation
Shall rest to me. You understand me not? —
Though what I tell you tears out my own heart!

CATARINA.

Madame!

LA TISBE.

Resist not, argue not, nor shake the faith
Your husband has in me. D' ye see my meaning?
With your mad fancy for repeating all,
How shall I frame my words? Stay! In this chamber
There exists one who soon is doomed to die;
But 't is not you! Now have I made it clear?

CATARINA.

Madame, I 'll do your bidding.

LA TISBE.

He returns.

[LA TISBE *hurries towards door at the moment it opens.*
Alone! Enter alone!

[*The Sbirros are seen with naked swords in the next chamber.* ANGELO *enters. The door is reclosed.*

SCENE X.

CATARINA, LA TISBE, ANGELO.

LA TISBE.

She is resigned;
She'll take the poison.

ANGELO.

Then it must be quickly.

CATARINA (*to* TISBE, *taking the phial*).

I know you are his mistress. If your thought
Be one of secret treason, — your intent,
My ruin; to supplant me, your ambition, —
Sad as my life hath proved, such act were vile;
And hard as 't is to die in youth's fair bloom,
Such *death* were joy beside a *life* so blazon'd.
[*She drinks.*

LA TISBE (*apart*).

What useless words, good Lord!

ANGELO (*going to the door and opening it*).

[*To Sbirros.*] You may depart.

CATARINA.

That drink freezes my blood!
[*Looking intently at* LA TISBE.
What say you, madame?

[*To* ANGELO.] Are you content, my lord? I soon shall die;
I feel it; and I cease to fear you, — demon!
So hear me say to you, as soon to God
I shall declare the same: There *is* a man
I love, yet I am *pure!*

ANGELO.

I 'll not believe it.

LA TISBE (*apart*).

I do believe.

CATARINA.

My powers begin to fail —

[ANGELO *approaches her, and places seat.*

No, not that seat. Off! Touch me not! I 've told you
You are a horror to me! I would die
Kneeling before the altar there within, —

[*Advances with tottering steps towards the oratory.*

Alone, at rest; no evil, searching eyes

[*Reaching the door she supports herself against the lintel.*

Fixed on me. I would die while praying God
For you, most wicked lord. [*She goes into oratory.*

ANGELO.

Troilo! [*The* USHER *enters.*

Take in my almonry, the key
Of my own private room. You 'll find two men;
Bring them me here without a whisper'd word.

[*The* USHER *goes out. To* LA TISBE.

When I have spoken to the night-watch, Tisbe,
I go to see the men they have arrested.
I will entrust to you the further care
Of what must now be done. Above all, silence!

[*Enter the two* NIGHT-WATCH *conducted by* USHER, *who retires.*

SCENE XI.

ANGELO, LA TISBE, *the two* NIGHT-WATCH.

ANGELO (*to the* NIGHT-WATCH).

In the night executions of the palace,
You 've often been employed. You know the crypt
Where lie the tombs?

NIGHT-WATCH.

We know it well, my lord.

ANGELO.

The secret passages are so involved
That, though the palace now is full of soldiers,
You could attain the crypt, thence leave the palace,
And yet be seen by none?

NIGHT-WATCH.

We can, my lord.

ANGELO.

'T is well. Within the oratory lies
A woman who has died. Let her be taken
Secretly to the crypt. There you will find
One of the pavement slabs has been displaced,
A grave been dug. That woman you will place
Within the grave, and then refix the stone
In true position. Do you understand?

NIGHT-WATCH.

My lord, we understand.

ANGELO.

You will be forced
To pass through my apartment. I 'll take care
That you shall find it empty.
[*To* LA TISBE.] Watch o'er all,
That it be done in safety and in secret.

[ANGELO *goes out.*

LA TISBE (*taking purse and offering it to the two* NIGHT-WATCH).

Two hundred golden sequins in this purse,
For you! The sum twice told to-morrow morn,
If you do faithfully all I direct.

NIGHT-WATCH (*taking purse*).

A bargain struck, madame. Where must we go?

LA TISBE.

That you shall know. But, first, seek you the crypt.

ACT IV.

THIRD DAY. — Part II.

Scene. — *A bedchamber. At the end, an alcove with curtains, and a bed within it. On each side of the alcove a door, — that on the right, concealed in the tapestry; a cabinet with casket thereon; tables, arm-chairs, on which are spread masks, fans, jewel-cases half open, theatrical costumes, etc.*

SCENE I.

La Tisbe, *the two* Night-Watch, *a* Black Page, Catarina *enveloped in a shroud and laid on the bed; on her breast is seen the crucifix of burnished copper.* La Tisbe *takes a mirror and uncovers the pale features of* Catarina.

La Tisbe (*to the* Black Page).

Bring me thy light, good Page.

[*She places the mirror before the lips of* Catarina.

I am satisfied.

[*Recloses curtains of the alcove. To the two* Night-Watch.

Do you feel sure that in your passage from
The palace hither you 've been seen by no one?

Night-Watch.

The night is pitchy dark, and at this hour
The town 's deserted. That we encounter'd no one,
You may be well assured. You saw us lay
The coffin in the grave and then replace
The slab. Fear nothing. We ourselves know not
If she, lying here, be dead. But this is certain,

That for the world at large she's in her tomb;
And you can act, unquestion'd, at your pleasure.

LA TISBE.

'T is well.
[*To* PAGE.] Where are the male habiliments
I told you to prepare?

BLACK PAGE.

They are here, madame,

LA TISBE.

And what about the horses I commanded?
Are *they* at hand?

BLACK PAGE.

Ay, madame, ready saddled.

LA TISBE.

Good horses?

BLACK PAGE.

I will answer for them, madame.

LA TISBE.

You've done well.
[*To* NIGHT-WATCH.] Tell me, how long time will 't take,
With perfect cattle, mind, to pass the frontier
And clear this State of Venice?

NIGHT-WATCH.

'T will depend.
The shortest route will be to Montebacco
In the Pope's States. Three hours' good travelling.

LA TISBE.

That will do. Now depart. Above all, silence.
To-morrow come and seek your promised guerdon.

[*The two* NIGHT-WATCH *leave.* *To* BLACK PAGE.
Go and make fast the door. On no pretext
Must any soul be now allowed to enter.

BLACK PAGE.

Signor Rodolfo comes by the secret door;
Must that be likewise closed?

LA TISBE.

No; do not touch it.
Should he come, he may enter, but alone;
Be that your special care. No soul beside
Must penetrate within these chamber walls;
And you yourself, unless I sound for you,
May not return. Yet, stay! fill me yon cup
With Cyprus wine and place it on this table.
[PAGE *pours out wine into cup and places same.*
'T is well. Here, gentle Page, take this.
[*Giving him a ring.*

BLACK PAGE.

A pearl!

LA TISBE.

'T is thine.

BLACK PAGE.

Oh, thanks!

LA TISBE.

Now leave me.
[*The* BLACK PAGE *goes out.*

SCENE II.

La Tisbe; Catarina, *lying on the bed.*

LA TISBE.

As I think,
'T will not be long to wait for the result.
She wished not death. That I can understand,
When we feel sure we 're loved! But lone, uncherish'd,
[*Turning towards* Catarina.
Thou wouldst have thought it blessedness to die!
How my head burns! Three nights I have not slept.
Two evenings back, the festal; yesternight,
The lovers' rendezvous which I surprised;
To-night — Oh, God! To-morrow I shall sleep, —
Sleep soundly.
[*Looks at the stage dresses spread out around her.*
Yes, we are a happy race,
We of the boards, — where all the world applauds!
"How charmingly you played La Rosamonda!"
Ye fools! Admire us, shower bouquets o'er us,
Discourse upon our charms, while underneath,
The heart in silence bleeds! Oh, my Rodolfo,
To have believed you loved me! 'T was a dream
Needful for my existence! Yes, while that
Whisper of hope remained, I thought and thought, —
How happy, when I die, to die near thee!
To die, — I pictured it, such and such way,
That it would thenceforth be impossible
Ever to tear my image from thy soul;
My shade living perpetual in thy presence,
And coming between thee and other women!
Oh, what is death? 'T is nought! Oblivion
Is double death! Therefore I do not choose

He shall forget.

[*Goes to casket and takes the black phial.*

And that 's where I arrive!

Fallen am I, truly, to this hopeless fancy!
See all that this unhappy world can grant me!

[*Pours poison from phial into the cup.*

Behold the only boon that love can offer!

[*She looks towards the bed and listens; then places phial on table near the cup, and going to the bed, draws back the curtains and fixes her silent gaze on* CATARINA, *then takes up the crucifix which was lying on her breast.*

Oh, should this crucifix bring happiness
To any living soul, it will not be,
Dear mother, to your child!

[*She places the crucifix upon the cup.*

There on the cup, —
'T will sanctify the draught!

[*The concealed door opens,* RODOLFO *enters.*

SCENE III.

LA TISBE; RODOLFO; CATARINA, *as before.*

LA TISBE (*starting*).

'T is you, Rodolfo!
Good! I've a word to speak that you must hear.

RODOLFO.

Madame, I also have a word to speak;
'T is you must listen.

LA TISBE.

I! To what, Rodolfo?

RODOLFO.

First tell me, are you quite alone?

LA TISBE.

Alone!

RODOLFO.

Give orders that we be not interrupted.

LA TISBE.

They are already given.

RODOLFO.

Allow me, then,
To fasten these two doors.

[*He locks the two doors.*

LA TISBE.

I wait your pleasure.

RODOLFO.

Whence come you, madame, and why look so pale?
What has your occupation been to-day?
What have those hands accomplished? How have passed
The execrable minutes of this night?
Tell me! Yet, answer not. I will tell you.
Do not reply to me; do not deny;
Invent not; lie not. I know everything.
I 'll prove to you that I know all your sin.
Hadst thought of Dafne? — but two paces off,
Divided only by a simple door,
Whence all could be distinctly heard, — nay, seen!
Remember you these words? When the Podesta
Declared he had no poison, you replied,
"I have some," — yea, "I have some!" Is that true?

LA TISBE.

What if that poison were a harmless drug
To give her gentle sleep, to give her rest?

RODOLFO.

Ay, rest eternal! Sleep that knows no dream!
You 'd be thought innocent, yet dare not vouch it.
What harmless drug was 't, say? — this deadly draught
Wherewith you would have *saved* her life. Quick, speak!
Be ready with your lie! So, madame, you
Have poison? Well, then, I — I have a poniard!
[*Draws a poniard from his breast.*

LA TISBE (*taking crucifix from off the cup*).

Rodolfo!

RODOLFO.

Madame, you have twenty minutes
To fit yourself for death!

LA TISBE.

Ah, you would kill me!
So that is your first thought! You 'd kill me thus, —
Yourself, — without reflection, without pause,
Being sure of nothing! And thus jauntily
You can resolve to sweep *me* from the earth?
So I have no more hold on you than that?
You would kill *me*, because you love another!
Can this indeed be true? Then tell me, Rodolf, —
Tell me with your own lips, — you 've never loved me?

RODOLFO.

Never!

LA TISBE (*groans*).

'T is well; with that one word you kill me.
Your knife will but forestall a lingering death!

RODOLFO.

What! love you? A vain dream! What love had I
To give? I *never* loved you; 't is my boast!
At best, 't was pity. Now I feel not that.

LA TISBE.

Ungrateful! One word more: she whom you mourn —
You loved her deeply, Rodolf, did you not?

RODOLFO.

To ask me how I loved her! Listen, then;
And may it torture you! You ask if I
Loved one who was as pure as holy saints;
Chaste, sanctified to me, — a being who
Had long become the altar of my life!
She was my blood, my thought, my consolation,
My only treasure, dear light of my eyes;
All *that* was she to me! 'T was so I loved!

LA TISBE.

In that case, I 've done well.

RODOLFO.

You have done well?

LA TISBE.

I have done well. Are you sure what I 've done?

RODOLFO.

You say I am not sure! Again you say it!
Yet Dafne heard it all; and what she told me
Still rings within mine ears. These were her words:
"There were but three together in the chamber, —
She, the Podesta, and another woman,
A demon the Podesta christen'd Tisbe.

Two hours," she told me, — "hours most pitiful, —
Two hours of agony they held her there,
The unhappy soul, crying and supplicating,
Asking for mercy, begging for dear life!"
Oh, my loved Catarina! yes, you begged
Your life on bended knees, your sweet hands joined;
Dragged at the feet of this detested tyrant,
Who said you Nay, and pointed to the poison, —
Poison procured by that false-hearted Tisbe;
Tisbe, who forced on you the deadly draught!
Tisbe, who, when you died, bore off the body!
Where has she carried it? That monster, Tisbe!
See you this handkerchief, found in her chamber?
Whose is it? Yours! This crucifix you hold, —
Whose is it? It was hers! Am I not sure?
Now 't is *your* turn. Beg, weep, and ask for mercy!
But promptly, that it soon may all be over.
I 'll not inflict the hours of agony!

LA TISBE.

Rodolf!

RODOLFO.

Now, quickly! What have you to say
To justify your deeds?

LA TISBE.

Nothing, Rodolfo!
All happen'd as she said. Believe it all.
In good time art thou here; I wish'd to die.
I sought the means of dying near to thee, —
There at thy feet; of dying by thy hand.
'T is more than at one time I dared to hope;
Now I may fall, perchance, into thy arms!
I bless thee for 't; at least thou now wilt hear
My last words' echo, the last sigh I breathe.

I do not wish to live. Thou lov'st me not!
Kill me! 'T is th' only blessing thou canst give!
Thus thou wilt take the charge of my last hour.
I give thee thanks!

RODOLFO.

Thy thanks!

LA TISBE.

No wrath! Couldst thou
Pour balm, 't were well. No idle words are mine;
From a heart come they, full to overflowing.
We mummers don't attract much public pity, —
The world's mistake! They know not all the courage
Or virtue which may find a home within us.
Think you I care for life? I begged my bread
An infant; at sixteen I yet was starving.
Snatched from the public streets then by great lords, —
From infamy, belike, by my own instincts, —
While living betwixt hunger and wild revels!
You laugh at hunger; yet I 've suffered much.
Pity, I know, is for great ladies only.
They weep, and are consoled; yield to wild passions,
For which you find excuses. But for us
All 's good enough! Err we? We are condemn'd.
Trudge on, poor soul; who stoops to pity you?
Child of the streets, were you not born to suffer?
Did it ne'er strike you, Rodolf, I had need
Of some heart bound to me by sympathy, —
By cords of hope, of thought, of suffering?
With none to love me, what must I become!
I have no future left, — none possible!
Think not I say these things to work on you.
Could I, I would not, though I deeply love you.
To what degree this stricken, misused strayling,
This unconsider'd waif, *could* love, *has* loved,

You 'll learn when I am dead, — not until then!
Six months we 've known; six months my sorrowing life
Like sickly fruit has hung upon thy stem, —
Thy smile my joy, thy breath my inner soul!
And yet through all, trust in thine earnest love —
The thought that was to feed and nourish me —
I never truly had. Now I know all!
Poor withered heart strive not! Thy warm pulsations
Were but an idle toy to thy beloved!
I pardon that. Love ne'er could be enforced.
Yet, Rodolf, how to walk through life without thee?
'T is *that* I cannot do; for soul, like body,
To live must freely breathe. Mine breathes through thee.
But see! I weary you; you do not even
Listen.

RODOLFO.

And so I am not sure! Attend!
When the Podesta went for help, you — left
Alone with that dear angel — whisper'd things
Most horrible, that made her take the draught.
See, madame, the very telling it distraughts
My reason! Speak! where 's Catarina? Answer!
Is 't true you 've murder'd her, empoison'd her?
Where is she? Say, where have you spirited
Away the only creature whom I loved?
My only, only love! Where lies she, madame?

LA TISBE.

His only love! His only love! Forbear!
Why stab so oft? Give me the last with this.
[*Pointing to the poniard.*
You are pitiless! Hear then: I hate this woman!
She hated me, and robbed me of life's hope.
I have requited *her* as Heaven alone
Can teach us to requite.

RODOLFO.

Then you confess, —
Truly confess; and, by the saints above,
I'd swear you make a boast of infamy!

LA TISBE.

Well might I boast, if boasting were my object.
What I have done, I had an oath to do,
Before I knew her. That which above all
Confirmed my purpose was the love I bore you.
Now strike!

RODOLFO.

Thou fiend!

[*Raises his hand with poniard. Catches sight of the phial.*

Yet stay! what drug is this?

LA TISBE.

The same decreed by Catarina's husband.

RODOLFO.

Indeed! The harmless potion which gives rest!

[*Takes up phial.*

Madame, you've need of rest; there's your narcotic.
I doom thee not; thou'rt judged to life or death,
According to thy truth or falsity.
You did, and you did not; you saved, you killed,
You spared, you sacrificed; anon, 't is harmless,
And then again 't is death. What should I think?

LA TISBE.

Whate'er you will; the best or worst, — I care not.

RODOLFO.

Neither the worst, nor best; the true, the proved.
Admit you loved, — loved deeply, — to wound deeply,

To stab in the one vulnerable spot,
You loved as such as you *can* love, — with passion ;
Thence malice, thence your jealous rage. Passion !
Whereby you dived into my heart's deep secret.
Passion ! that baneful soil whence springs fell hate, —
A plant whose noxious seeds shall be thy death.
Is not this just ? Am I not logical ?
Is it not right that thou shouldst share the fate
Thou hast ordained ? Thine acts alone shall judge thee.
[*Takes cup, and pours from phial therein.*

LA TISBE.

That were the true desire of my own heart.

RODOLFO.

And that thy true desert ; is 't not ?

LA TISBE.

I know not.
I dare not say 't would be my true desert ;
Yet would I do your will.

RODOLFO.

Thy true desert.
[*Pointing to the cup.*
This harmless, — if thou didst not poison *her*.

LA TISBE.

Nor did I.

RODOLFO.

Devils can, as well we know,
Palter with truth. Granted she took the potion
Herself. Was this the draught you pressed upon her ?
Do not prevaricate.

LA TISBE.

You shall be answered
[*Apart.*] Oh, Heaven pardon me!
[*Aloud.*] That was the drug
Her husband willed that she should take!

RODOLFO.

This poison?

LA TISBE.

The same.

RODOLFO.

Confess, then, what befell her after.

LA TISBE.

Did not your watchful Dafne tell you that?
I thought she had recounted all our acts.

RODOLFO.

Your acts! Henceforth I 'll minute them myself,
Watch o'er your punishment, to the last breath
You draw; to the last groan; feed on your tortures,
Till I behold you as you witness me, —
Full steeped in all the sufferings of the damn'd.

LA TISBE.

Oh, cease this violence.

RODOLFO.

Wouldst have me calm?
Calm, when thou know'st how thou hast injured me, —
Deeply and rancorously injured me?
Dammed up the sanguine current of my life,
And made a swelling flood of vengeance rise
That will engulf you, your great lord, and all!
But I 'll be calm; and Heaven's awful justice
Shall not more even handed be than mine,
Nor Solomon show wiser than your Rodolf.

LA TISBE.

Ay, wise and calm! How the heart tricks itself!
Reason enough had I to hate this woman
Who came 'twixt me and my life's happiness.
She ne'er loved *me*, and yet — I pitied her.
You *have* I loved; and you return me hate.
You think you're calm, the while a whirlwind rages;
But when that cloud of passion shall have passed,
As it most surely will, and you see clearly,
And things assume again their form and colour,
You 'll gaze in stupor on my corpse before you
And wonder how I should have spared your love.

RODOLFO.

You would persuade me. 'T is impossible!
I offer you the life you offered her.
Thy doom hast thou thyself alone decreed.
Drink — or —

[*Holding up the poniard.*

LA TISBE.

No threat! That can I *not* obey;
Compel me with your *will*, — I do your bidding;
Without compulsion it would be self-murder.

RODOLFO (*throws away the poniard, and offers her the cup*).

Then thus do I compel. Now, in all honour
You dare not shun the test!

LA TISBE (*taking the cup*).

Then, dearest mother,
To you, in this deep draught of life, I drink, —
Ay, life immortal! And to *you*, Rodolfo,
Your happiness be ever unalloyed!

[*Drinks, and lets fall the cup; then looking upward.*
May she whom I have saved remember me
When she looks up to heaven and blesses him!
Give me thy hand that offered me the cup.
[*Takes his hand and kisses it. He stands bewildered.*
Thanks, my deliverer! Leave thy hand a little;
No harm I wish thee, Rodolf, well beloved!
When you came in, could you have seen yourself,
Your lifted knife, the manner of your words
When you exclaimed, "Madame, you 've twenty minutes,"
You might have known I could no longer live.
Now I am dying — be good! Expend one word
Of pity on me! It were well.

RODOLFO.

What mean you?

LA TISBE.

[*A murmuring voice heard behind the curtains.*
One word of kindness! Wilt not?

CATARINA.

Where am I?
Rodolf!

RODOLFO.

What do I hear? Whose voice is that?
[*Turns round and sees the pale face of* CATARINA, *who has partially opened the curtains.*

CATARINA.

Rodolf.

RODOLFO (*runs to her, and raises her in his arms*).

Great Heaven! What means this? Catarina!
You here! Alive! Oh, what then have I done?
[*Turning to* LA TISBE.

LA TISBE (*dragging herself towards him*).

Nothing, Rodolfo, — thou hast nothing done.
I did it all. I longed for death, and chose
Thy hand to accomplish it.

RODOLFO.

Dear Catarina!
Alive! Just Heaven! How, then, hast thou been saved?
[LA TISBE *groans.*
Tisbe! Oh, help! Insensate that I was!

LA TISBE (*crucifix in hand*).

I'm past all help; I know it well, and thank thee.
Give full scope to your joy; think not of me.
By my own heart I know you must be happy!
I tricked her husband in the draught I gave.
The world believed her dead; she did but sleep.
Horses await you in the outer court;
Fitting disguise for her. Depart at once.
In three hours you will pass the State of Venice.
Be happy! She is free, her husband dead!
How? Ask the Secret Council; ask the Ten.
I die!

RODOLFO.

Help, Catarina!
[*Falls on his knee, his eye fixed on the dying* TISBE

CATARINA (*to* LA TISBE).

Pardon him.
I know all now. To you I owe my life!
Light breaks on me! An angel's holy impulse!
That crucifix! It was thy mother's life
My father, at my bidding, spared.

LA TISBE (*kissing crucifix*).

It was.
I die, Rodolfo; think on me sometimes,
And own that Tisbe had some good in her.

[*To* CATARINA.

Allow me, while I live to say Rodolfo,
Rodolfo, bless thee!

RODOLFO.

I have been thy curse!
Oh, pardon me, and let me bless *thee* dying!
My Catarina saved —

LA TISBE.

By me, for thee!

[LA TISBE *dies.*

THE END.

AMY ROBSART.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Dudley, Earl of Leicester.
Richard Varney.
Sir Hugh Robsart.
Flibbertigibbet.
Alasco.
Lord Sussex.
Lord Shrewsbury.
Foster.
Elizabeth, Queen of England.
Amy Robsart.
Janet.

Lords, Ladies, Guards, Pages.

Time, 1575.

AMY ROBSART.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *A large gothic chamber. Glass door at back, open window on right. A chair of state with double seat, surmounted by the coronets of an earl and countess; black velvet drapery conceals the legs of this chair. A table with twisted legs.*

SCENE I.

EARL OF LEICESTER, VARNEY. *Both enter speaking.* LEICESTER *places a little iron box on the table.*

LEICESTER.

Thou 'rt right, Varney, though thy counsel be hardly that of my conscience. To avow my secret marriage with Amy Robsart to the Queen is at present impossible. Elizabeth does me the rare and distinguished honour of visiting me in my castle of Kenilworth. She will be here in some hours, bringing in her train my antagonist, or rather my enemy, the Earl of Sussex, to whom she would reconcile me.

VARNEY.

Now, the Virgin Queen, as people call her, does not willingly allow that those who aspire to her favour be, any more than herself, swayed by the human law of love. To confess, then, that neither your heart nor hand is free would be to give the Earl of Sussex such an advantage —

LEICESTER (*interrupting him impatiently*).

I tell thee, Richard, I shall do whatever thou wishest, whatever the difficulty of the situation demands; but for all that, my soul is not the less filled with trouble and anguish. What is royal favour in comparison with domestic happiness? What is the enmity of Elizabeth when pitted against Amy's love?

VARNEY.

If my lady had heard the Earl of Leicester draw that parallel, her heart would have been penetrated with gratitude.

LEICESTER.

My darling Amy!

VARNEY.

If my lord of Sussex had heard the Earl of Leicester heave that amorous sigh, his heart would have been swelled with hope.

LEICESTER.

Sussex! Sussex! I have resolved to keep silent, I tell thee! Yet if the Queen discover without me that which thou dost prevent me from discovering to her myself —

VARNEY.

Do not be alarmed, my lord. The ruins of the old mansion of Kenilworth are so placed as to escape the prying curiosity of everybody. It is at a distance from the new castle, and is believed to be both uninhabitable and uninhabited. And, in sooth, if the mysterious dove of my lord did not find a nest therein, one might say — even though it still harboured our surly old warder, Tony Foster — that the owls were its only tenants.

LEICESTER.

'T is well; leave me, Varney. Go, give an eye to the preparations for the reception of the Queen. I must speak to our worthy astrologer.

VARNEY (*affecting surprise*).

What! you have brought Alasco here, my lord?

LEICESTER.

Yes, on yesterday. Didst not know it? He is confined in the secret chamber, above. Have some provisions brought him, Varney, while I question him on a certain horoscope.

VARNEY.

Enough, my lord. [VARNEY *bows and withdraws.*

SCENE II.

LEICESTER *alone.*

LEICESTER (*slowly approaching one of the windows*).

Not a cloud in the sky. Ah, if it be true that our destiny can be subjected to the action of the stars that sparkle over our heads, never was the revelation of their influence more needed by me than at this very moment, for my earthly path is darkened and confused.

[*He sits near the table, opens the iron casket, and draws from it a small parchment inscribed with cabalistic signs.*

I cannot withdraw my eyes from these mysterious signs, traced by the hand of Alasco. Am I right, in good truth, in trusting to these lofty predictions? What would England say if it knew that at this hour the

noble Earl of Leicester, the all-powerful favourite of Elizabeth, was seeking, like a child, to read his destiny in the symbolic lines of an astrologer? And yet, hath not my weakness been shared by all who have cherished some supreme ambition in their hearts? Vulgar destinies need no horoscope; but, before crossing the Rubicon, more than once did Cæsar take counsel with the prophetesses of the Gauls!

[*He approaches the wall at the back, opens a little concealed door, and, after looking round him anxiously, calls in a muffled voice.*

Alasco! Demetrius Alasco!

[*A little man, advanced in years, descends a narrow dark stair. He is clad in a grey, flowing robe. He is bald-headed, with white beard and grey eyebrows.*

SCENE III.

LEICESTER, ALASCO.

ALASCO.

At your service, my lord.

LEICESTER (*showing him the parchment*).

Dost thou know, old man, that in this thou hast given expression to many audacious fancies? This night no cloud has dimmed the sky, and so to thee it must have been an open book. The stars have not, then, confirmed these rash predictions of thine?

ALASCO.

I have, on the contrary, seen again, my son, in your star that which it has already revealed. Earl of Leicester,

great is thy ambition, but greater still shall be thy fortune!

LEICESTER.

Then thou wouldst have really caught a glimpse of something through the shadow of my destiny?

ALASCO.

Need I repeat it? A throne. And what a throne! The first of the world!

LEICESTER.

Old man, dost weigh thy words?

ALASCO.

You ask the truth, my lord. I know it is not always prudent to tell it to those who are masters of the earth.

[*At this moment* LEICESTER *happens to catch the false and piercing eye of* ALASCO *fixed on him. He quickly places his hand on his dagger.*

LEICESTER.

Wretch! thou deceivest me! By the soul of my ancestors, thou dost dare to palter with me! Thou shalt pay dear for thy impudent jest.

ALASCO.

He jesteth not who hath his eye on heaven, his foot in the grave! Listen, my son. To-day it is full April moon in the great Chaldean arc. It has been announced to me that on this day your unworthy servant was to incur a mortal peril, from which he would escape safe and sound. I am old, feeble, and defenceless, and you are young, strong, and armed; yet I have more confidence than you in the double prognostications: your star has not lied, and you will not kill me.

LEICESTER.

The proof! the proof! Give me proof that I am not the dupe of an impostor!

ALASCO.

The proof? The proof is that while predicting a royal future I am not ignorant of the obstacles the past throws in its way.

LEICESTER.

How? What obstacles? What dost thou mean? Who has told thee?

ALASCO.

Remember, my son that you had me dragged yesterday like a wild beast from my obscure retreat; that a carriage closed to every eye conducted me to this donjon, isolated from all the abodes of men; that no human voice has struck my ear for twenty-four hours; and that, deprived of food and sleep, as the cabalistic law prescribes, I have spent the night in this narrow turret, studying for you, with my dim eyes, the book that has no leaves. Now question me, and try to discover if human agency could have taught me that this ruin is not deserted, as is believed, and that it conceals from the world an inmate —

LEICESTER.

God! Stop! silence! He is right. How could he have known?

ALASCO (*drawing a parchment from his bosom and appearing to examine it attentively*).

The irregularity of the stellar zones indicates that the birth of the young girl, although honourable, is inferior to the rank of the noble earl. Nevertheless, the crossing of the lines announces a legitimate marriage, which is kept

secret, as the neighbourhood of the nebulous chormith proves. But this marriage cannot fail to be dissolved; for the pale star of the young lady will disappear in the hair of the great comet from the southern quarter, which draws in its train the beautiful star of the glorious Earl, and represents —

LEICESTER.

And represents? Finish! wretch, finish!

ALASCO.

Do you insist, my lord?

LEICESTER.

Make haste, I order you.

ALASCO.

I am but an impotent old man; that which my mouth utters, my mind has not conceived.

LEICESTER.

Speak, I say! wilt speak?

ALASCO.

The great crowned comet represents a high and sovereign dame who is to come from the south —

LEICESTER.

What is he saying? Old man, what dost thou hide under these mysterious words? Who is — who is, I say, this puissant personage?

ALASCO.

The Earl of Leicester is not ignorant of the symbols of heraldry; he will be able to recognize her by her crown.

LEICESTER.

Heavenly powers!

ALASCO.

This sovereign brings with her hither a vague tenderness — that shall become clearer and stronger. And perhaps — What is love compared to ambition? The hand that bestows a sceptre is not refused. The lord of this castle is not accustomed to halt on the road of greatness —

LEICESTER (*bewildered*).

Enough, old man, enough! You speak to me of the future, and your voice troubles my soul, as if 't were the voice of remorse!

ALASCO.

Good my lord, if —

LEICESTER.

Enough, I tell the! Alasco, if thou valuest thy life, bear this always in mind: he who knows everything must know how to be secret about everything. I will reward thy words generously, — thy silence more generously still. [*He throws him a purse of gold.*

[VARNEY *returns, followed by a servant carrying a basket containing refreshments. The servant places the basket on a piece of furniture and goes out.*

SCENE IV.

LEICESTER, ALASCO, VARNEY.

VARNEY.

Your orders are executed, my lord. The Castle of Kenilworth is ready to receive her Majesty the Queen.

LEICESTER.

I am now going to get myself ready, and shall return here immediately, to comply with a gracious wish expressed by the lady of the house. Do you, Varney, take care of Alasco. Pay him all the respect his age and learning demand. [VARNEY *bows*. LEICESTER *leaves*.

SCENE V.

ALASCO, VARNEY.

VARNEY (*regarding* ALASCO *with a smile*).

Well, thou old devil's cub, so our master, — thine and mine, — is thy dupe? The royal lion of England has been caught in thy snare, fox?

ALASCO.

You might express yourself in more seemly fashion, my son. If my science —

VARNEY (*interrupting*).

Thy science! Go to! Lay aside the mask with me who know thy face. Wilt dare tell me thou hast truly read in the stars the astounding revelations which thou hast just made to the Earl?

ALASCO.

At least, mysterious means —

VARNEY.

Yes, yes; a parchment a nimble and stealthy messenger of mine glided into thy hand yesterday evening on thy arrival.

ALASCO.

Ah! Then the young man who spoke to me in the darkness came from you? Who was he, prithee? His voice sounded familiar to me.

VARNEY.

A page the devil has placed at my disposal. So thou hast known how to profit by the information he brought thee.

ALASCO.

Why not? It left me a little precious time for the more useful purpose of observing occult nature for the conquest of the universal science. One step more and I shall have penetrated into the recesses of the laboratory of creation, shall hold in my hands the generating principle of gold! And then it will be my turn to be thy master, insolent favourite of the favourite!

VARNEY.

Tut! tut! Master Alasco, let us not quarrel! I have such faith in thy science that were I to lose thy favour I were fain to eat nothing but fresh eggs for the next three months.

ALASCO.

Thou saucy fellow! *my* philters! my draughts! Dost think I would waste them on thee? Dost think I would expend for sake of thy miserable life those sublime quintessences of rarest plants, of purest minerals, wherein are concentrated so many precious elements that the domains of a Leicester would not pay for a single phial of them. Rest easy, Varney! Though, in good sooth, one could extract more venom from thy body than from a viper, thou 'rt not worth a drop of my poisons.

VARNEY.

Nothing thou hast spoken so far has reassured me so much as thy last words.

ALASCO.

And as for penetrating thy master's secrets without thy aid, Richard Varney, I could do so as readily as I have penetrated thine!

VARNEY.

My secrets? It is not hard, by my faith, to know them. I have none.

ALASCO.

Of a truth? This clandestine marriage of Leicester, the breaking of which thou hast so much at heart, — it is his interest that moves thee solely, is it not? — because 't would stop him in his splendid career?

VARNEY.

Granted; and perhaps, too, to exchange the livery of a nobleman's equerry for the mantle of a king's master of the horse.

ALASCO.

And for this alone, my subtle Varney? Thou wert the screen under which the brilliant Earl of Leicester was introduced to the beautiful Amy Robsart; it was while taking shelter behind thee that, wishing to seduce Amy but seduced by her, he made her his wife. For old Sir Hugh Robsart, the man who stole away his daughter is not Dudley; it is Varney.

VARNEY.

These secrets, O perspicacious Alasco, thou hast learned from my mouth.

ALASCO.

Yes, but there are others I have read in thine eyes. Thou hast taken thy comedy seriously, good master of mine; thou lovest Amy Robsart, and that passionately.

VARNEY (*with a forced laugh*).

I! — oh, to be sure!

ALASCO (*with emphasis*).

Thou lovest Amy Robsart passionately! And if thou insistest on separating her from the Earl, it is in hope that one day she will belong to the master of the horse.

VARNEY.

Silence! Who could have told you this? Not the Countess; she is too proud!

ALASCO.

Thy uneasiness proves to me I was not mistaken. If the Earl learned in what manner his master of the horse abuses his confidence —

VARNEY.

If the Earl knew in what manner his astrologer plays upon his credulity — Come! come! Alasco, let us remain good friends! Trust me, it is the safest plan for both [*Drawing near him.*] Hearken. Your laboratory at Pelham blew up one fine morning as if 't were a volcano of hell. You know that in the domain of Cumnor we have one ten times finer, wherein you 'll find furnaces and star-studded spheres, left by a former abbot, and there thou shalt melt and puff and multiply and amalgamate and vaporize and volatilize quite at thine ease until the Green Dragon become a golden goose —

ALASCO.

Good! And for entering on possession of the fine workshop, what is expected of me.

VARNEY.

To do as I say, and be silent as to what I do.

ALASCO.

Be it so. But, before all, answer me this: Are they going to keep me long a prisoner in this deserted turret? I do not fancy being alone in this fashion during the night with the screech owls and buzzards.

VARNEY.

What is that? The sorcerer frightened, like a child, by darkness and solitude? Thou 'rt not making any gold so far, Alasco, and so dost not dread robbers. As to demons, they will surely leave thee quiet, in this world at least.

ALASCO.

There is not only this world; there is the other! And this very night I saw —

VARNEY.

Prithee, what? Thy master, Satan, furnished with his horns twelve cubits long, and his tail, which makes as many coils on itself as the spiral staircase of St. Paul's belfry, London?

ALASCO.

Laugh not, Varney, and speak lower. Yes, this night, at midnight, I have seen a spectre.

VARNEY.

Dost take me for Leicester, Alasco?

ALASCO.

Speak low, I tell thee! Varney, once upon a time I had a disciple, a pupil —

VARNEY.

Ay, a confederate.

ALASCO.

Silence, I tell thee! He was a queer being, capricious and malign, with the spirit of a devil and the nimbleness of a sylph, — resembling a child rather than a man, a goblin rather than a child. He was called Flibbertigibbet.

VARNEY.

In fact, a proper name for a goblin.

ALASCO.

He had a prying eye and a penetrating mind; he made himself master of certain secrets of mine —

VARNEY.

What an imprudent youth!

ALASCO.

I was obliged to separate from him. I quitted Pelham, leaving my laboratory, my alembics, and furnace at his disposal. But in a compartment of this furnace I had forgotten a little barrel of powder!

VARNEY.

Ingenious negligence!

ALASCO.

I learned two days afterward of the explosion of the laboratory. My poor pupil surely found his death in it.

VARNEY.

The poor pupil at least carried away thy secrets with him to the grave.

ALASCO.

Yes, but he is bringing them back again from it! Varney, it was he! It was his ghost that appeared to me this night under the ogive of the turret!

VARNEY.

Is it possible? And what said he to thee?

ALASCO.

Terrible things, — things that hell, death, and he alone could know. With a frightful laugh he cast in my face what he called his assassination. I half fainted with terror —

VARNEY.

And under what form did the shade of Flibbertigibbet present itself?

ALASCO.

Under that of a young demon, with skin the hue of fire. Phosphorescent sparks glowed at the tips of his black horns in the moonlight.

VARNEY (*aside*).

It must for sure have been my mad little merry-andrew.

ALASCO.

Well, Richard, what say you of this strange vision?

VARNEY.

Now, is n't it a dream rather than a vision?

ALASCO (*shaking his head*).

No, no, Varney! The infernal powers are meddling with our affairs. We must be on our guard!

VARNEY.

An additional reason why we should be united, my good father! Alasco, it does not rest with me to restore thee at once to liberty; but I can secretly urge Leicester to do so. Do thou help me, and I 'll help thee. The Earl is about to return, and must not find us together. Keep faithfully the alliance between us, and I 'll do the like. Agreed?

ALASCO (*they shake hands*).

Agreed!

VARNEY.

Enough, my dear Alasco; farewell! [*Aside.*] Devil take thee, thou poisoning quack-salver!

ALASCO.

Good-bye, then, my dear Varney. [*Aside.*] May lightning blast thee, damned villain!

[*Exit* VARNEY.

SCENE VI.

ALASCO *alone, then* FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

ALASCO.

That man has no conscience; he does not believe even in hell!

[*Suddenly a piercing voice calls from outside the hall.*

THE VOICE.

Doboobius!

ALASCO (*starting*).

God! who calls me by that name?

THE VOICE.

Dr. Doboobius!

ALASCO.

Heavens! it is the name under which I am outlawed! And the voice is that of Flibbertigibbet!

THE VOICE.

It is Flibbertigibbet himself.

ALASCO (*hiding his face in his hands*).

Oh, God! and in daylight now! Pardon! pardon!

THE VOICE.

Pardon? On one condition.

ALASCO.

What is it? Speak! What wouldst thou?

[FLIBBERTIGIBBET *jumps through the open casement and appears, wearing a fire-coloured costume.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*pointing to the basket of provisions*).

What would I? A piece of bread and a cup of wine.

ALASCO (*raising his head in surprise*).

Strange language for a ghost!

[*He examines* FLIBBERTIGIBBET, *who has opened the basket and drawn from it a flagon and piece of bread, which he eats greedily.*

But art thou not dead?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*eating*).

Yes, faith! — of hunger and thirst.

ALASCO (*touching him*).

Why, he is really alive, my poor Flibbertigibbet!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Not thy fault, good master mine, — eh? And I would not ask better than to make thee die of fear in turn. But

't is nearly eighteen hours since the ghost has eaten, and his youthful appetite brooks not further delay. Every one must live, — even phantoms.

ALASCO (*aside*).

Alive! I don't know if I would n't prefer him a spectre! [*Aloud.*] So thou hast escaped the explosion, then? By what miracle?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

There was no miracle about it; it was by address. I took good care to find out your mine, my gentle master; and though it blew up, it was when I was outside.

ALASCO.

I swear, my child —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Oh, plague take your oaths! I know you. I know, moreover, your secrets; and that makes you fear me, while I have not the slightest reason to fear you.

ALASCO (*aside*).

Confound the little wretch! [*Aloud.*] My dear Flibbertigibbet, let us forget the past! I assure thee that no one rejoices more than I do at thy return to life. But answer my questions. How is it thou 'rt here?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I am here seemingly to help on the dark designs of your accomplice Varney with regard to the mysterious lady who is living here in concealment. Varney! One more player in the game into which I am beginning to see clear.

ALASCO.

But, tell me, why this odd disguise?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I gave up my trade of wizard, — it was becoming too risky, — and have taken to the stage. I am one of the troop that is to take part in the revels with which the Queen is to be welcomed by the Earl of Leicester. I play devils and goblins in the masques of Shakespeare and Marlowe, and wear the costume proper to my service to distinguish me from the gentlemen.

ALASCO (*aside*).

The ape! [*Aloud.*] How do you like your new trade?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hum! not too much! I am tired of always repeating the same phrases and making the same grimaces. By nature I am curious, and I like to be free. I would fain play a real part and mix in a real intrigue. I scent one here which, methinks, is dark enough and very interesting; and so I have not rejected the proposals of this Varney of yours, while resolved to take only such part therein as suits myself.

ALASCO.

Well, wilt thou come back to me, then?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Why not? — but with the same reservations and precautions. Have no doubt of that.

ALASCO.

As you like. I would rather fancy on my own account, a little more knowledge as to the mysterious lady, as you call her, and as to my Lord of Leicester, too, than Varney chooses to give me.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Ay, to aid you with your horoscopes, I do not doubt.

ALASCO.

The Earl and the lady are coming here in a few moments. If you could —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hear what they tell each other, and then tell it again to you? Nothing could suit me better! I shall be delighted, on my own account, to listen to a dialogue between the falcon and the dove.

ALASCO (*looking round him*).

You must be concealed somewhere —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Here is my lord's chair of state, looking as if 't were made expressly for the purpose!

ALASCO.

Good! Make haste, I hear some one coming.

[*He helps* FLIBBERTIGIBBET, *who crouches behind the chair.*

[*Aside.*] If he were only surprised there and hanged from the gutters of the castle! What a riddance!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*under the seat*).

They are coming. Go back, Dr. Doboobius.

ALASCO.

Call me not by that name!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! the serpent has cast his skin and taken a new one.

[ALASCO *returns to the turret.*]

SCENE VII.

LEICESTER *wrapped in a cloak;* AMY; FLIBBERTIGIBBET *concealed. The Countess enters leaning on the arm of the Earl.*

AMY.

How good you are, my lord, to have kept your promise and given way to my humour! How kind to show yourself to your poor recluse garbed as beseemeth the great prince you are. Permit me to unmantle you.

LEICESTER (*smiling*).

Thou art like other women, then, Amy? The jewels and feathers and silks are more to them than the man whom they adorn.

[*He affects to resist the Countess as she takes the mantle from him and shows him dressed in his courtier costume and wearing all his orders. He is clad entirely in white. Hose of white silk, doublet of white satin, white leather belt embroidered in silver, mantle of white velvet embroidered in silver and decorated with the star of the garter.*

AMY.

Amy has proved to you, dear Earl, that she cannot love thee better in this glorious garb than she did when you came, a stranger, heralded by the sound of your horn, into the woods of Devon, in a simple russet brown cloak.

LEICESTER.

Thou speakest the truth, my love.

AMY.

And now, my lord, sit thou there as a being for all men to worship.

[*She leads the Earl to the great chair. He sits down.*

LEICESTER.

But do thou come and share my state with me.

AMY (*sitting on a footstool at the feet of the Earl*).

I stay here.

LEICESTER.

Thy place is at my side.

AMY.

Not so; at thy feet. Let me be, dear my lord; I am better here; I am well thus. [*Contemplating him.*] How splendid, how magnificent you are, so attired, my lord! What is this embroidered strap around your knee?

LEICESTER.

This embroidered strap, as thou callest it, is the English Garter, an ornament which kings are proud to wear. See, here is the star which belongs to it, and here the Diamond George, the jewel of the order. You have heard how King Edward and the Countess of Salisbury —

AMY (*smiling, and lowering her eyes*).

Oh, I know — I know how a lady's garter became the proudest badge of England's chivalry.

LEICESTER.

This most honourable order I had the good hap to receive at the same time with three most noble associates, — the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Northampton, and the Earl of Rutland. But must not he who climbs a ladder begin at the first round?

AMY.

But this other fair collar, so richly wrought, and bearing some jewel like a sheep hung by the middle attached to it, — what does it signify?

LEICESTER.

It is the badge of a venerated order, once appertaining to the House of Burgundy, — the order of the Golden Fleece. It hath the highest privileges attached to it; for even the King of Spain himself, heir of the House of Burgundy, may not, unless by assistance and consent of the Grand Chapter of the order, sit in judgment upon a knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

AMY.

And to what country does this other brilliant collar belong?

LEICESTER.

It is the Order of Saint Andrew, revived by the last James of Scotland. It was bestowed on me when it was thought the young widow of France and Scotland, the hapless Mary Stuart, would not have refused to wed an English baron. But is it not better to be a free lord of England than share with a woman that dismal and rocky kingdom of the north?

AMY.

I think like my noble Leicester. As to myself, I should consider the hand of Dudley preferable to that of all the sovereigns of the earth.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Alas!

AMY.

What aileth thee, my lord? Dost thou think the love of a queen could be more tender and ardent than that of thy Amy?

LEICESTER (*kissing her on the forehead*).

No! oh, no! And nothing shall tear thee from my arms, my wife! My darling wife!

AMY.

Thy wife, yes. It is as thy wife that the daughter of an obscure country gentleman rests her head on the breast of the most glorious lord in the realm, — on that breast which is loaded with the badges of the most illustrious orders of chivalry of Europe But when shall I be thy wife before all the world, as I am before God and thee?

LEICESTER.

Whenever it be possible, dear child. [*He rises.*] But now thy desire hath been gratified, and in despite of my happiness near thee I must bid adieu.

AMY.

A moment, my dear lord, a moment yet! When I ask thee to proclaim me thy wife before all, thou dost not, I hope, accuse me of empty pride and vain-glory. And yet how proud I should be to be recognized as the avowed wife of England's noblest earl! But, Dudley, I think, above all, of my unhappy father. What is he saying at this very moment? What is he doing? What must have been his desolation on that day when he rose without receiving his child's accustomed kiss! My poor father! Did he believe, could he believe that I was seduced and carried off by this Varney, your equerry?

Ah, this idea is to me unbearable! He knows thee not, my Leicester; and even if he had not lowered his daughter to the rank of Varney, he could never conceive her raised to thine. My love, release me from my oath. Allow me, at last, to run to him, to undeceive him, to restore to an old man his darling daughter, and to restore her as the spouse of the glorious Earl of Leicester.

LEICESTER.

One day, yes, Amy, — one day this shall surely happen; and, believe me, thou canst not wish for that day more fondly than I. With what rapture could I retire to console thy father in his old age, and casting aside the toils and cares of ambition, spend my life at thy feet, — at the feet of the most adorable and adored woman in Europe! But alas! we must still wait and be content to hope.

AMY.

But why? Who hinders this union, for which you say you wish and which the laws of God and man alike command? Ah, did you but desire it even a little, nothing could bar your wish; for never could greater power have served juster claim.

LEICESTER.

It is easy for you to speak thus Amy. You do not understand the requirements of rank, the duties of power! And you make this request of yours on the very day when I was about to ask you to keep yourself more closely concealed than ever. Do you not know that it is to-day, almost immediately, I receive the Queen in this castle?

AMY.

The Queen? Well, what better opportunity of disclosing our marriage to her could you have?

LEICESTER.

What are you saying, my unfortunate child? Do you know what a capricious and ephemeral thing is royal favour? Such a disclosure would destroy us both. Trust to me, my darling Amy. A happier time will come; and if it does not come of itself, I will summon it. Meanwhile, spoil not our parting by desiring that which thine own interest forbids me to grant.

[*In rising to embrace* AMY, *he pushes the chair, which suddenly moves back and discovers* FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

LEICESTER (*perceiving* FLIBBERTIGIBBET).

What is this?

[*He tears himself from the arms of* AMY *and rushes on* FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

What is this rascal doing here?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*slowly raising his head*).

You see, my gracious lord. I was present incognito at the conversations of the fair Meriandre and the fair Indamara; like the jealous Odragonal, I was listening.

LEICESTER.

Indeed? Well, thy listening shall cost thee thine ears!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

It is likely.

LEICESTER.

What art thou?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Whatever is your good pleasure. A living man or a corpse. A corpse if your dagger wills it so; if not, a living man, and one who liketh the end of a feast better than the beginning of a quarrel.

LEICESTER.

Thou malapert knave, playest thou with the halter of thy gibbet?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Since I can't cut it.

LEICESTER (*violently agitated*).

'T is some emissary of Lord Sussex and my enemies. Go to! thy boldness shall receive such punishment as shall make thy fellows tremble.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

They are not numerous. My Lord Earl, three things you can do with me at your choice: hang me as thief to the topmost branch of the forest; nail me as spy to the great gate of the castle; send me as wizard to hell in flame —

LEICESTER.

This assurance is far from usual! Yet boots me much to know who has set him as a spy here. Listen, rascal. Thou hast well deserved all these punishments, — nay, worse still than these. Well, thou canst escape them and gain pardon by telling me of whom thou art the miserable instrument.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

To save my life? 'T would be cowardice!

LEICESTER.

I can do more than give thee thy life. Thou art doubtless paid for thy trade as spy; say how much, and if thou add by whom, thou shalt have tenfold what thou 'rt promised. Reveal this wretched intrigue —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

To make my fortune? 'T would be baseness!

LEICESTER.

What! threats and promises avail naught with thee? Force will have more success. Who hath prompted thee to hide thyself there? Answer! if not —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I care as little for speaking or being silent as I do for the seven branches of the Marvellous Lamp; and if you had asked me in a different tone, likely I would have answered you as you wished, the man who has brought me to this bad pass being a vile intriguer whom it would like me well to see punished. Only, high and mighty lord, silence being the only superiority which I have over you, I do not see why I should renounce it.

LEICESTER.

Ah, this is too much! [*He draws his dagger.*] Traitor, thou shalt die!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! The secret shall die with me.

AMY (*terrified, holding back the arm of the Earl*).

My lord! Dudley! What are you about to do? To end our sweet love parley with a murder!

LEICESTER (*with the dagger raised*).

Ay, so that it end not in a catastrophe more sinister still.

AMY.

Ah! pardon for this poor creature, good my lord!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*aside*).

She is adorable!

LEICESTER.

Amy, stay me not! This wretch is a spy.

AMY.

No, my lord! Look at that ridiculous costume. 'T is some mummer; or, at most, a madman.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

'T is so, noble lady, defend me! We are related to each other. I am mad as the moon and you are beautiful as the sun!

AMY (*smiling*).

You see well he is out of his senses! Come, my lord. Would you poniard this defenceless creature before your Amy's eyes? Mercy! Pardon! From your chivalry I demand the grace granted of old to the ladies in the tourney. Grant me this poor life. Come, come!

[*She takes the dagger from the hands of the Earl, who regards her with a smile, and makes but a weak resistance.*

Give me this villanous dagger, sir, and let it be banished from its place near a heart which is all mine.

[*She throws the dagger through the open window.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*aside*).

Villanous dagger! Beshrew me! And it was a real Toledo poniard, damascened in gold!

LEICESTER.

You are a child, Amy! In sparing that life you perhaps expose yours and mine.

AMY (*quickly*).

Believe it not! An act of clemency cannot bring ill hap. Besides, how could the lot of the eagle depend on that of —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

The bat. Let me pick out the animal for myself.

AMY.

Come, my lord, let it not be said that you refused me everything to-day.

[LEICESTER *clasps her in his arms. She turns quickly to* FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Thou hast thy pardon.

LEICESTER.

Yes, rascal, but not thy liberty. I must have thee in safe keeping until I know who thou art.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

You see already, fair lord, a devil; but a poor devil, and not a bad devil.

LEICESTER (*calling*).

Hola! Varney! Foster! Janet! Some one!

SCENE VIII.

The same. VARNEY; FOSTER, *doublet of velvet and yellow stockings. They run in tumultuously.*

VARNEY.

What does my lord require? [*On perceiving* FLIBBERTIGIBBET; *aside.*] Ah, my little treacherous masker! What meaneth this?

LEICESTER.

You do your service very negligently, Foster. Who has allowed this fellow to enter?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Scold not that clod-pate, good my lord. After the fashion of devils in all ages, I have made my way here through the key-hole.

VARNEY (*aside*).

I breathe again. He has not sold me.

LEICESTER.

Put this masker in the castle prison.

FOSTER.

In the tower where are the dungeons; very well, my lord. Whence comest thou, then, thou red-haired devil?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*laughing and looking at the costume of the warder*).

From the fens, — where I learned the art of catching geese with their webbed feet and yellow stockings.

LEICESTER.

Let this prisoner be kept closely confined. Nobody must communicate with him, but let him want for nothing and suffer no harm. Go.

[VARNEY *and* FOSTER *try to seize* FLIBBERTIGIBBET. *He frees himself from them.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

A moment, my masters. [*He kneels before* AMY.] You are so good that you do not need to be so beautiful as

well. Madame, to you the mummer owes his life; he hopes to pay one day the debt.

[FOSTER *and* VARNEY *drag him out with them.*

AMY.

You see well that he is more mad than wicked.

LEICESTER.

Ah! I have some vague foreboding — The solitude of this dwelling is violated. It is the small black cloud, — forerunner of the tempest. Adieu, Amy. I leave thee with Janet.

AMY.

Shall I not see you again to-day, my lord?

LEICESTER.

The duties imposed on me by the presence of the Queen permit it not. But to-morrow, when thou hearest the great bell of the castle give warning that Elizabeth has retired to her apartments, I'll profit by the respite.

AMY.

She must be very happy, this queen! she has stronger hold on thee than thy wife.

[LEICESTER *sighs deeply, embraces her, leaves and again returns.*

LEICESTER.

Farewell! farewell! [*Exit.*]

SCENE IX.

AMY, JANET.

JANET.

Oh, my lady, if you knew!

AMY.

What?

JANET.

In the new part of the castle there are such crowds and uproar of men and horses. There are instruments playing, and such fine revels in preparation; but we shall not see them. They say the Queen is coming, and we shall not see her either.

AMY.

Ah, I know all this; but if I were free it is not the Queen it would pleasure me best to see.

JANET.

You knew, then, my lady? Perhaps you also know —

AMY.

What next?

JANET.

The name of the old man who, like yourself, appears to trouble himself very little about the revels, and confines himself to prowling around the castle.

AMY (*quickly*).

How! What old man?

JANET.

A tall, venerable old man with a white beard. I see him often walking on the heights that command this ruin. He sits down in the brushwood and hides his head in his hands, or raises it to the tower like a hunter on the lookout for a flying bird.

AMY.

And is it known who he is, whence he comes, or what he wants?

JANET.

No; Foster fears he is a spy of Lord Sussex, and has been thinking of some means to get rid of him.

AMY.

Janet, as thou valuest thy life, forbid him troubling this old man! Tell me, where could I see him?

JANET (*looking through the open window*).

My lady, come here! Look, look yonder! He is passing by the foot of the hill!

AMY.

God in heaven! it is my father!

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The great hall of the Kenilworth Castle.*

SCENE I.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, my lord, yes, my dear host, it must be! You and my Lord of Sussex must be reconciled this very day. Forget not that such is the pretext for our visit to Kenilworth. It is also the pretext for that private interview which I have been happy to grant you. So without further words, reconciliation —

LEICESTER (*bowing in assent*).

Your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

Enough, I am satisfied. 'T is all I demand. Speak we now of other things. Do you know, my lord, that this domain of yours is in naught inferior to our domain of Windsor! And your reception of us is worthy of duke or peer, worthy even of a king.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Of a king! [*Aloud and bowing profoundly.*] All that which your Majesty hath deigned to honour with an indulgent glance, belongs to your Majesty; and in laying it at your feet, my sovereign liege, I but do the honours of what is your own gift.

ELIZABETH.

It is to me you owe all that I admire in this castle, — all that I am almost tempted to envy?

LEICESTER.

What Leicester is tempted to envy the possession of here, my liege, is what he never can possess.

ELIZABETH.

How is this, my lord? Does not all here belong to you?

LEICESTER.

Does all here belong to me, my liege?

ELIZABETH (*smiling*).

My lord, there is some boldness in your respectful bearing; and at the very moment you bend your head so humbly, it seemeth to us you raise your thought very high.

LEICESTER.

Have I been so unfortunate as to offend your Majesty?

ELIZABETH.

I have not said so, Leicester. Only, when you hold in your grasp all that man can wish for, — titles, riches, honours, — and at the same time speak thus in a place where everything attests your power, I ask myself what can be the further aim of an ambition which all this cannot satisfy.

LEICESTER.

My ambition! How little your Majesty knows of the soul of Leicester. Take from your unworthy servant his castles, his earl's coronet, his peer's robe, despoil him of all your bounty hath bestowed on him, leave to Dudley — become once more the poor gentleman you found him — but his father's sword and the donjon of his ancestors, and his heart will preserve in exile and oblivion the same gratitude, the same love towards his Queen.

ELIZABETH (*aside*).

Love! [*Aloud*]. Well, yes, I see your emotion and am touched by it. Dudley, methinks I sometimes see a cloud of sadness on that brow which ought to be radiant only with joy. What aileth thee? Why do you not bare your soul to my eyes? Am I your enemy?

LEICESTER.

I have a secret, in good sooth, my gracious liege. Such goodness should embolden me, perhaps, to —

ELIZABETH (*gently*).

You do not finish, Leicester. Do you fear that your secret might be guessed —

LEICESTER.

I fear, madame —

ELIZABETH.

Go to! your secret might be guessed, and yet you have naught to fear withal —

LEICESTER.

Ah, your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

That name by which you call me restores me to myself. Alas! I sometimes forget that I am queen, to remember that I am woman. If I were like others, free to consult my heart, then perhaps —

LEICESTER.

Madame —

ELIZABETH.

But no, — it cannot be! Elizabeth of England must be the wife and mother of her people alone.

LEICESTER.

I have at least lost none of the precious favour of my Queen?

ELIZABETH.

No, Leicester, no! Quite the contrary! We were speaking, I think, of your fair domain. Why, then, are you unwilling that I should visit you ruined donjon, which has such an imposing effect when seen from a distance?

LEICESTER.

That ruin is deserted, your Grace, and hardly accessible.

[*The door opens at the back; appears an* USHER, *who halts at the threshold.*

ELIZABETH.

Who is this, pray? Who dares enter here without an order?

SCENE II.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, AN USHER.

USHER (*bowing profoundly*).

I obey the instructions of your Majesty. You bade me introduce, before the reception of the two noble earls, an old gentleman for whom my Lord of Sussex has demanded an audience of your Majesty.

ELIZABETH.

Ah! I remember; I promised, in truth, my Lord of Sussex to receive an old officer who has fought under my orders, and has some complaint or other to present.

LEICESTER (*smiling*).

A complaint! Against me, no doubt?

ELIZABETH.

Sussex would not dare. But I must receive this gentleman.

LEICESTER.

My liege, I withdraw.

ELIZABETH (*with a smile*).

Go! [*She gives him her hand to kiss.*

LEICESTER (*bows, and on going out, says to the* USHER).

Introduce the old man.

SCENE III.

ELIZABETH, *then* SIR HUGH ROBSART.

ELIZABETH (*alone*).

Why am I queen? The daughter of Henry VIII. the wife of Dudley, — that can never be! And yet he is so grand, so noble! his glance at once so tender and so proud! But to marry him would be to abdicate! What do I say? Is it not he who really reigns?

[*The door at the back opens.* SIR HUGH, *in deep mourning, throws himself at the feet of the Queen.*

SIR HUGH.

Justice, madame! justice!

ELIZABETH.

Rise, sir! You approach your Queen in very bold fashion.

SIR HUGH.

No, madame; I will remain at your feet until you have heard me. Your Majesty will not refuse the

august and last succour that is left me. You will not repulse an old man, an old servant, who has shed his blood for you, — an outraged father, who comes to ask at the hands of the Virgin Queen the return of a daughter ravished from his arms.

ELIZABETH (*in a gentler tone*).

Your daughter has been taken from you, then? Rise, I say! Your daughter has been taken from you? And who would dare to do such a deed in this realm of England, which God and the saints protect? Your name?

SIR HUGH.

Hugh Robsart, of Tèmpleton.

ELIZABETH.

Are you descended from that Roger Robsart who did such valiant service to our ancestor Henry VII. at the battle of Stoke?

SIR HUGH.

Yes, madame; and as Lord Sussex will tell you, I have fought faithfully for your Majesty myself.

ELIZABETH.

Speak, then, in all confidence; and believe that we are as true a lover of justice as you are loyal subject.

SIR HUGH.

I had but one child, a daughter, gracious madame; and an old father, who is near the tomb, may be pardoned for placing all his pride and joy in an only daughter. Well, madame, an infamous seducer came to me, in my retirement, as a friend. He spoke with the guile of the serpent, and my daughter has followed him.

ELIZABETH.

In truth, I pity you. We who are a crowned Queen do not know how any woman can let herself be ensnared by the wiles of a man. But it seemeth possible, since your tale has no other burthen. And what, Sir Knight, is the name of the ravisher?

SIR HUGH.

He is — Gracious madame, he is one who has puissant protection.

ELIZABETH.

Well, is his protection more puissant than ours?

SIR HUGH.

Pardon, my liege! I am little accustomed to the language of Courts, and know little of the value of words. This ravisher is the equerry of the Earl of Leicester!

ELIZABETH.

Of Leicester! The most blameless man in all England has a seducer in his household! The name of this miserable equerry?

SIR HUGH.

This coward who attacks the virtue of maidens and flies from the swords of men is called Richard Varney.

ELIZABETH.

Richard Varney? — good. And your daughter's name is Amy, is it not? What has he done with her?

SIR HUGH.

Alas! madame, she is here, — even here. I saw her at one of the windows of the ruined donjon at the end of the park.

ELIZABETH.

What? Lord Leicester told me that donjon was uninhabited. Are you sure of what you say? Have you tried to enter?

SIR HUGH.

The door has been kept closed against me. It is no doubt because this ruin is deemed deserted that the scoundrel Varney has concealed my unhappy Amy in it.

ELIZABETH.

Old man, you shall have justice. God's death! We are the born mother and protector of the maidens of England. A base equerry seduce the heiress of an honourable house! My Lord of Leicester will be exasperated when he hears of this abominable deed. We promise you, Sir Knight, our influence with him against this Varney whose credit with my lord you seem to fear.

[*She goes to a table and affixes her seal to a parchment.*

Take this safe conduct before which all doors open, and assure yourself whether your daughter is really concealed in this donjon. You have our leave to withdraw, for the Court is waiting to be introduced. [*She strikes a bell. An usher appears.*] Conduct this gentleman, and let the two lords enter with their attendants.

[SIR HUGH *leaves by a lateral door. The great folding-door at the back opens, and leaves free passage to the Court.*

SCENE IV.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, VARNEY, SUSSEX, SHREWSBURY. *Ladies, Bishops, Peers, and Officers of the Queen. Knights, Pages, and Guards of the attendants of the suites of the two Earls. The two lords enter at the*

same time through the great folding-door at back. They salute the Queen and arrange themselves with their partisans, each on one side of the scene. The Queen is seated in the middle.

ELIZABETH.

My lords, what means this? We bring you hither to be reconciled, and you show your antagonism in the royal presence! Come, draw near each other and join your hands, which must never be separated when the needs of our service require them to be united.

[*The two Earls bow, but remain silent in their places.*

My Lord of Sussex, my Lord of Leicester, have ye heard us? What signifies this unwillingness to move? this silence? Will neither of you take the first step?

LEICESTER.

My liege — [*Aside.*] An uncouth soldier!

SUSSEX (*aside*).

A foppish upstart! [*Aloud.*] Your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

Yes, so we are called; and because we are so called, noble Earls, you shall obey us. [*To* LEICESTER.] Dudley, you are the youngest, and he is your guest. It is for you to take the first step. [*To* SUSSEX.] My Lord of Sussex, to please me you would fly to a battle, and you retreat before a reconciliation!

SUSSEX (*without moving*).

Madame, I were well content my Lord of Leicester should say in what I have wronged him, since there is nothing I have said or done which I would not be willing to justify either on foot or horseback.

LEICESTER.

And for me, always under the good pleasure of my gracious sovereign, my hand shall be as ready to justify my deeds and words as that of any man that ever bore the name of Ratcliffe.

[*The two Earls look haughtily at one another.*

ELIZABETH.

Which of you, my Lords of Sussex and Leicester, wishes to taste the fare of our Tower of London? We are here the guest of one of you. But, by God's death! look ye to it that we make not one of you our guest before many hours. For the last time, let me see you obey and join hands in mutual love. [*In an imperious voice.*] My Lord of Sussex, I entreat — my Lord of Leicester, I command you.

[*The two Earls look at each other in stubborn silence, still hesitating, but at last advance and take each other's hand.*

LEICESTER (*bowing*).

My Lord of Sussex, it is with the purest joy — [*Aside.*] A traitor who has me spied in my own house!

SUSSEX (*bowing*).

My Lord of Leicester, I am delighted — [*Aside.*] A felon who surrounds himself with poisoners and cut-throats!

ELIZABETH.

Why, this is well! Banish your jealousies and resentments. Henceforth let my two most faithful servants be at the same time two sincere friends. My Lord of Leicester, we wish to distinguish the visit wherewith we honour you by some token of grace to such of your retinue as you yourself may choose for such promotion. Whom among your officers do you deem most worthy of the honour of knighthood?

SUSSEX (*aside to* SHREWSBURY).

You 'll see she will not think of mine!

ELIZABETH.

By the way, Leicester, is there not among your equerries a man named Richard? Richard — What is his name?

VARNEY (*low and quickly to* LEICESTER).

It is no doubt of me the Queen wishes to speak, my lord.

LEICESTER.

If I might venture to help your Majesty's memory, is it Richard Varney?

ELIZABETH.

Precisely, my lord. What do you think of this Varney?

LEICESTER.

He is a faithful servant of his master, and a devoted subject of your Majesty. His merit and his zeal are such as place him truly above his condition, and if —

ELIZABETH.

Is he here?

VARNEY (*eagerly*).

Here I am at the feet of your Majesty.

ELIZABETH.

Well, my lord, I am glad to be able to undeceive you as to the real character of a knave and a traitor who sullies your noble house. This hypocrite, whom you praise in such good faith, is but a vile ravisher. Would you believe that he has dared to seduce and carry off the daughter of a worthy gentleman named Sir Hugh Robsart?

LEICESTER (*with a cry of terror*).

Great God, madame! [*Aside.*] Ah, the spy of Sussex!

ELIZABETH.

I share your indignation, and shall further increase it by informing you that this villain has had the audacity to conceal her in the very house where to-day you receive your Queen.

LEICESTER (*thunderstruck*).

Just Heaven! madame, do you suppose — [*Aside.*] I am lost!

SUSSEX (*aside to* SHREWSBURY).

What does this mean? Leicester has turned very pale!

ELIZABETH (*to* LEICESTER).

My lord, you seem disturbed!

LEICESTER.

I acknowledge in fact, madame, that —

VARNEY (*falling on his knees, crossing his hands, and bending his head*).

Madame —

ELIZABETH.

What hast thou to say for thyself? Dost thou avow thy crime? Hast thou carried off this girl? Is she concealed here? Answer, yes, or no.

VARNEY.

Yes.

LEICESTER.

Wretch —

[*He is about to throw himself on* VARNEY.

ELIZABETH.

My Lord of Leicester, if you permit it, we shall inform ourselves touching this matter without your help. We have not ended our examination of your officer. [*Aside.*] How deeply he is moved! [*Aloud to* VARNEY.] Did the Earl of Leicester, thy master, know of this intrigue? Tell me the truth, no matter how high the head it touches, and fear not. Thine is under our safe-guard.

VARNEY.

Your Majesty wishes the truth? The entire truth, before high Heaven, is that my lord was the cause of the whole matter.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

The traitor! [*Aloud.*] Thou villain, darest thou —

ELIZABETH (*with sparkling eyes*).

Silence, my lord. Speak on, Varney! Here no commands are heard but mine.

VARNEY.

And I, like all, obey you. Yet I would fain not speak of my master's concerns to other ears than yours.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

To betray me at thy ease, thou viper!

ELIZABETH.

The concerns of thy master?

VARNEY.

Yes, my gracious liege, if your Majesty permit me to be so bold, I shall ask you to grant me a moment's secret audience. I might give your Highness explanations that perhaps would satisfy you; but if they were

public, the honour of a respectable family might suffer. These are delicate matters.

ELIZABETH.

We are content. But if thou tryest to palter with us, by the soul of my royal father, the people of London shall be witnesses to the building of thy gibbet. Leave us alone, my lords, for a moment.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

I am lost!

[*All withdraw save* VARNEY.

SCENE V.

ELIZABETH, VARNEY; *an Usher at the door at the back. The Queen is seated;* VARNEY *remains on his knees.*

ELIZABETH.

Rise and speak. What hast thou to say in thy defence?

VARNEY.

I acknowledge, your Grace, that my crime would be great if I had, as my dread sovereign imagines, taking advantage of the weakness of a young girl, seduced and dishonoured her.

ELIZABETH.

What is this? Richard Varney, have I been misinformed? Is the guilty man another than thou?

VARNEY.

No, the Queen has been correctly informed, but, gracious lady, you have not been informed of everything. Mistress Robsart is not dishonoured, unless it be dis-

honour to be the wedded wife of the equerry of my Lord of Leicester.

ELIZABETH.

What? You have married her? Amy Robsart is then your lawful wife?

VARNEY.

My lawful wife, an 't please your Majesty.

ELIZABETH.

Take heed thou deceive us not, sirrah! If thou hast married her, why accuse the noble Earl? What dost thou charge him with? May he not have been entirely ignorant of the matter?

VARNEY.

My Lord of Leicester was, in good sooth, entirely ignorant of the matter, yet is he, I repeat it, the cause of everything. Your Majesty may judge for yourself.

ELIZABETH.

Go on, we are listening.

VARNEY.

My noble master, that glory of England's Court, hath long since renounced marriage. Some secret anxious feeling, the cause whereof none can fathom, has made him fly from all of womankind. It is said my unhappy master — But, madame, am I to repeat what is said?

ELIZABETH.

Speak on! speak on!

VARNEY.

'T is said, my lord doth hide in the depths of his soul a passionate love for one so high above him that 't is not permitted him to hope.

ELIZABETH.

What? Still, methinks, there is no woman too highly placed to be out of reach of the noble Earl.

VARNEY.

Alas! your Highness must know well that there is one.

ELIZABETH.

What sayest thou? What dost thou mean? I do not understand thee, Varney.

VARNEY.

Guesses here are rash. Yet often have I seen my noble master, unconscious that he was observed, kiss a lock of hair. I had need to raise mine eyes very high to see its fellow.

ELIZABETH.

Well, well. You were saying then that your master—

VARNEY.

My lord, entirely absorbed in this passion, will not hear of marriage, either for himself or for any of his household.

ELIZABETH.

Poor, noble Earl!

VARNEY.

And so, being desperately in love with Mistress Amy Robsart, I thought I must conceal our marriage to 'scape dismissal from my lord's service. Have I not some cause to say then, gracious madame, that my master is the cause of this mystery and seeming crime,—that the fault is his?

ELIZABETH.

The fault is not so grave!

VARNEY.

I did but wait a favourable occasion for making a full confession to him; and now if your Majesty deign to say a few words on my behalf, I doubt not he will grant me pardon, at the same time maintaining me in my office and leaving me my wife.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, since Amy Robsart is thy wife I promise, Varney, to appease the wrath of thy master.

VARNEY.

Madame, my gratitude —

ELIZABETH.

And we are about to take such measure ourselves that Sir Hugh Robsart shall not blush for his son-in-law.

VARNEY (*bowing profoundly*).

The kindness of your Majesty doth penetrate —

ELIZABETH.

Enough, Varney; I am content with thy explanation. Usher! let the doors be thrown open.

SCENE VI.

ELIZABETH, VARNEY, LEICESTER, SUSSEX, *the entire Court.*

ELIZABETH (*after a moment's silence*).

Your sword, my Lord of Leicester.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

The sword first, and the head after.

SUSSEX (*aside to* SHREWSBURY).

Would this mean his disgrace, I wonder?

[LEICESTER *unbuckles his sword and presents it to the Queen on bended knee.*

ELIZABETH.

Richard Varney, come forth and kneel down.

[VARNEY *obeys. She draws the sword from the scabbard; movement of surprise in the assembly, emotion among the ladies.*

LEICESTER (*aside*).

What is her intention?

ELIZABETH (*gazing on the sword with satisfaction*).

Had I been a man, methinks none of my ancestors would have loved the flashing of a good sword better. As it is, it liketh me to look on one. If Heaven had made me beautiful, it is in such a steel mirror as this I would fain arrange my woman's gear. Richard Varney, in the name of God and Saint George we dub thee knight!

[*She gives him the accolade with the flat of the sword.* Be Faithful, Brave, and Fortunate! Arise, Sir Richard Varney. [*General astonishment.*]

LEICESTER.

Ah, she rewards the treachery of Varney before punishing mine!

ELIZABETH.

The buckling of the spurs, and what other rites remain, may be finished to-morrow in the chapel. Varney, your fortune has now had a beginning, but learn to temper your desires. I think it is that mad, gamesome fellow, Shakespeare, who says this: "Ambition doth o'erleap itself and falls o' the other side." Go!

[VARNEY *makes a profound salutation. The Queen turns to* LEICESTER.

Gramercy, my Lord of Leicester, banish the shadows from that gloomy brow of thine. The evil that was done has been repaired.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

What could he have said? [*Aloud.*] I do not yet know —

ELIZABETH.

Yes, my lord, you have been misunderstood; but the honour of your noble house has not been tarnished.

LEICESTER.

I do not comprehend, madame.

ELIZABETH.

You shall in a moment. But permit me first to ask you to do me a favour.

LEICESTER.

It is already done, madame, when you deign to ask it.

ELIZABETH.

It is to pardon your equerry Varney, — who, without your consent, has married Amy Robsart.

LEICESTER.

He! Amy Robsart! [*Shaking his clenched hand at* VARNEY.] Wretch!

ELIZABETH.

My lord, restrain your indignation. Since he has been so mad as to fall in love with her, and so culpable as to carry her off, you can hardly blame him for making her his lawful wife.

LEICESTER.

Thou shameless villain! hast thou dared —

VARNEY (*bending his head*).

Good my lord and master, it was the only means of repairing a great misfortune, — of saving what else was lost.

LEICESTER.

I cannot contain myself. This audacity of thine shall cost thee dear.

ELIZABETH.

My lord, you have promised us to pardon him.

LEICESTER.

Madame, it is such an affront!

ELIZABETH.

Not by any means such an affront as Sir Hugh Robsart suffered withal.

LEICESTER.

No, madame, I am going to tell you all. Alas! you do not know —

VARNEY (*hurriedly*).

Her Majesty knows all, my lord. She is acquainted with your invincible dislike to marriage, — a dislike so extreme that you cannot brook it even in the case of your servants. She knows that your soul hides a mysterious passion —

ELIZABETH (*quickly*).

Silence, Varney!

[*Drawing near* LEICESTER, *in a faint voice.*]

My lord, do you deny that secret passion he has the boldness to imagine? [LEICESTER *tries to speak.*] Hush! I understand and pity you; but be prudent, my dear Dudley!

LEICESTER (*bowing*).

Madame, such goodness! [*Aside.*] O torture!

ELIZABETH.

My lord, we will let Varney himself complete his justification to yourself. Sir Richard Varney, it is our good pleasure that your wife be present at our reception to-day.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

God!

VARNEY.

Your Majesty shall be obeyed. Such a favour does great honour to my wife and me.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Insolent knave!

SUSSEX (*whispering to* SHREWSBURY).

He is now in greater favour than ever!

ELIZABETH.

Come, my Lord of Sussex, come, my lords and gentlemen, it is time to take your parts in the sports and interludes which the courtesy of my Lord of Leicester hath prepared for our entertainment.

SCENE VII.

LEICESTER, VARNEY.

LEICESTER (*with indignation*).

What hast thou done, thou false knave? My Amy to pass in the eyes of the world for thy wife!

VARNEY.

In good truth, my lord, I am guilty, — guilty of an insane devotion to your person. For whom have I adventured that reckless declaration? Who was on the brink of ruin? Who required to be saved? Was it I, poor and obscure, with nothing to lose and nothing to gain?

LEICESTER.

Go to with thine intentions! Was it needful thou shouldst say she was thy wife?

VARNEY.

Ought I then to let it be believed she was my mistress?

LEICESTER.

No, of a surety, no! but you ought to have — you ought to have —

VARNEY.

What, my lord?

LEICESTER.

Exposed me to danger rather than to shame. 'T would be better to have acknowledged everything.

VARNEY.

That was not the meaning of your furious look when you thought I meant to denounce you. Acknowledge everything! Overturn with a word the highest destiny in Europe, reduce to the condition of a simple country squire that illustrious Earl of Leicester who bestows peerages, appoints generals, distributes bishopricks, convokes and dissolves parliaments, the young and glorious minister for whom the very ballads of the people prophesy the most august of all unions! Excuse me, my lord, I freely grant that I had not such courage — or such baseness!

LEICESTER.

And yet, after all, is not all this greatness purchased too dear at the price of happiness? Instead of wasting my life in the struggles and perils of power, should I not be doing better, — ay, a hundred times better, — by living, as you say, like a peaceful country squire at the feet of my beloved wife?

VARNEY.

Peaceful? Pardon me, my lord, but I did not say peaceful. Beware! my lord. During the time I was speaking to the Queen, when the suspicion occurred to her that one greater than I might have been the seducer of the young girl, I saw gather on her brow all the jealous anger of the woman who loves —

LEICESTER.

What is this thou sayest? She loves me, you think, Richard?

VARNEY.

Ay, ay, she loves you! Her love for you has reached that point where rank is nothing, self-sacrifice a trifle, and every obstacle worthy only of laughter. We have seen a will less strong than hers break bonds less fragile than yours!

LEICESTER.

She loves me! Art really sure she loves me?

VARNEY.

I have only seen her vexation, but you have seen her joy. And now go to the daughter of Henry VIII. who loves you, and believes herself loved in turn; tell her of your marriage with a country damsel at the very moment she is perhaps thinking of offering you her royal hand; reveal to this Queen, who purposes making you a king,

that there is already a Countess of Leicester; go, my lord, tell Elizabeth Tudor that she has a rival, go — and I say to you that you will endanger your own head, and a head that is dearer to you than your own.

LEICESTER.

Amy! my Amy in peril! Enough, Varney! What thou hast done has been done well.

VARNEY (*aside*).

Ha! I have him at last!

LEICESTER.

We must save Amy, Varney. She must perhaps pass — for being that which you told the Queen.

VARNEY.

Still, you must remember the consent of my lady is essential.

LEICESTER.

What sayest thou? Prithee, why?

VARNEY.

You have heard the Queen, my lord. She desires that my pretended wife be presented to her to-day.

LEICESTER.

It is true. God! O God!

VARNEY.

Do you think my lady can conquer her repugnance so far as to bear my name for a little time? She is the daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart, but I am now Sir Richard Varney.

LEICESTER.

It does not matter. She is Countess of Leicester, and as proud in her virtue as is Elizabeth of England in her power!

VARNEY.

Then let us not speak of it further. There is nothing to be done.

LEICESTER.

But we are lost, then! Varney, she is lost! Do not forsake me! Advise and direct me.

VARNEY.

How can I, my lord? Is it I who have influence and authority over my lady? Have I the power of convincing or the right of commanding her?

LEICESTER.

She loves me too well to allow herself to be persuaded to such a course, and I love her too well to speak as a master.

VARNEY (*folding his arms*):

Well, let us await the consequences of the fury of the Queen.

LEICESTER.

No, no. I must save her at any price. Hearken, Varney. Spare me a harrowing and most embarrassing scene with Amy. Speak to her in my name.

VARNEY.

Useless. She would not believe me.

LEICESTER.

You can at least try.

VARNEY.

'T would be a waste of time when we have no time to lose!

LEICESTER.

What if I gave you my orders to her in writing?

VARNEY

They should be decisive and imperious. You must give me full powers.

LEICESTER (*hesitating for the last time*).

Well, be it as you wish.

[*He goes to the table, writes a few words, and hands the paper to* VARNEY.

Is that sufficient?

VARNEY (*after reading*).

Yes, my lord. We must, however, take our precautions in case my lady, notwithstanding this written order, should refuse to present herself to the Queen.

LEICESTER.

What could we do then?

VARNEY.

The only thing in our power would be to conduct the Countess to your domain of Cumnor, by force if need be, and tell the Queen she has fallen dangerously ill. [*Aside.*] It is a domain in which Alasco rules.

LEICESTER.

What? violence!

VARNEY.

For sake of her own safety.

USHER (*entering*).

Her Majesty commands the attendance of my Lord of Leicester.

[*On a sign from* LEICESTER *the* USHER *leaves.*

LEICESTER.

Well, well! I trust her, as I trust myself, to thy fidelity, Varney. And now I go to meet the Queen. Oh, what a situation is mine, — placed between two women, one of whom has the power, the other the right! [*He retires.*

VARNEY.

Yes, my master; and what renders the situation still graver is that you are at once weak and ambitious! [*Reading the paper again.*] "Amy, trust all that Richard Varney tells you. Whatever he does, it is by my order and by my will." Ah, now, proud Amy, you are mine!

ACT III.

SCENE. — *Same as in first act.*

SCENE I.

VARNEY, ALASCO.

VARNEY.

We are nearing the end of our ambitions, Alasco; one more effort and we shall have a king for our master. You say you think Flibbertigibbet might be useful to us? In good truth, he did not betray me yesterday.

ALASCO.

Yes, if you require for your expedition some one who is young, alert, and intelligent —

VARNEY.

Oh! my object is simply to get hold of a person who might be troublesome, and bring that person secretly to Cumnor. But who will answer for your pupil?

ALASCO.

He is at this moment, as the saying is, at death's door, and will be glad to get out of his unpleasant plight at any price. Yet such is the craft of the fellow that it would not surprise me if he were out of prison at the very time we are speaking.

VARNEY.

Tush, tush! he is not as cunning as this prison is strong. It has only one outlet, and this outlet opens on

the passage between the dungeons. So that if I wished to rid me of thy pupil, I would open the door instead of shutting it, being careful first to draw the bolt of the trap-door, and would send him very quickly to frighten the rats in the cellars of the donjon by a visit made in the perpendicular.

ALASCO.

All very well. But how can you reach him. The Earl, in your presence, forbade Foster any communication between him and any one whatever, and his prison has, as you say, but one door.

VARNEY.

Yes, one visible door. But listen; there is another concealed one that communicates by a secret passage with the turret which you use as a laboratory. I alone know all the windings of this castle.

ALASCO.

As Beelzebub knows all the windings of thy soul.

VARNEY.

Not unlikely. Here is the key of the secret door of which I spoke. Find Flibbertigibbet, lay before him our proposal. If he accepts it, enlist the imp in our service; if he refuse, why, thou canst avail thyself of this visit to drop something in his drinking water —

ALASCO.

Good, good! Is that all?

VARNEY.

Not yet; I have kept the most important matter for the end. Thou must prepare, on the instant, a sleeping potion, which, administered in a given case, to a woman

for example, may send her into a sleep at once, and that sleep so profound that she shall let herself be taken to a carriage, and may travel a whole night without awaking and, consequently, without giving the alarm or making resistance.

ALASCO.

I agree. And for whom is this potion intended?

VARNEY.

Ask the planets.

ALASCO.

Must I stop at sleep?

VARNEY.

Thou damned old poisoner, I order a harmless drink of thee, — harmless, dost thou understand? Harmless! dost understand the meaning of the word?

ALASCO.

Very well; I am not to be asked, then, to affect the House of Life?

VARNEY.

Take thou good care not to affect this house if thou 'dst save thine own hovel! If thy dose be not as inoffensive as a glass of water, I swear to thee on my soul, thou shalt suffer as many deaths as there are hairs on thy head. Dost laugh, thou old satyr!

ALASCO.

Doubtless. [*Taking off his cap.*] I am bald, and then too, you swear by your soul.

VARNEY.

I hear some one walking in the gallery. Come, set about thy sleeping mixture; and mind, above all, it be

harmless, thou devil's apothecary! I shall return to show thee the secret passage.

[*He pushes him to the secret stair, enters after him and shuts the door.*

SCENE II.

AMY, *a casket in her hand;* JANET, *with a mantle which she throws over the back of a chair; afterward,* FOSTER.

AMY.

Janet, open the window on the side next the new castle. Methinks I shall so hear better the tolling of the great bell which is to announce to me the near arrival of my lord. Make an end of my attiring. Quick, my necklace, my bracelets.

[JANET *draws them from the casket and fastens them on her mistress.*

JANET.

They are very white, these pearls; but this arm is still whiter. All the same, they are magnificent! I am sure every one of them must be worth —

AMY.

Fie, fie, Janet! All the galleons of Portugal could not pay for them; 't was he who gave them to me!

JANET.

You are very beautiful, my lady!

AMY.

May he think as thou dost, child! Alas! If I ever had any beauty, it has had to stand many a severe ordeal. My poor eyes have shed many tears since I left

my father. My father! When I think that he is here, that he is near me! Ah, I am both afraid and anxious to see him. [*Enter* FOSTER.] What is your business with me, good Foster?

FOSTER.

My lady, you are about to receive a visit.

AMY.

A visitor to me, Foster? You forget your instructions; I am forbid to leave the castle, and no one is allowed to enter here.

FOSTER.

Yes, my lady; but when a visitor presents such a pass as this — [*He hands a parchment to* AMY.

AMY (*casting a glance on the parchment*).

A pass from the Queen! Foster, let him enter. There is no door in England which must not open before this.

[FOSTER *throws open the door. Enters* SIR HUGH ROBSART.

SCENE III.

The same; SIR HUGH ROBSART. SIR HUGH *stops on the threshold.* AMY *utters a cry.*

AMY.

O God! my father!

[*She makes a sign, and* FOSTER *and* JANET *go out.*

SIR HUGH.

Yes, God and your father. Your father who is here in your presence, and God who has led him hither.

[AMY *rises and runs up to him. He draws back.*

AMY (*stopping*).

Father!

SIR HUGH.

Madame! I do not know if it is by that title I am to address you.

AMY.

Ah, these are hard words! Call me your daughter. You are my father always.

SIR HUGH.

Your judge, Amy.

AMY.

Oh, do not freeze me with that gaze! If you only knew —

SIR HUGH.

What? Finish! I will not condemn you unheard.

AMY.

And I have taken an oath. I cannot speak.

SIR HUGH.

Alas! do I not already know a part of the truth? Have you not left your father to follow your seducer, this equerry of Lord Leicester, this —

AMY.

Father, you are mistaken. Appearances —

SIR HUGH.

Appearances! See, I am in mourning, you in holiday garb. Is this appearances? Come, tell me, of whom are you the mistress?

AMY (*raising her head*).

Father, I am married!

SIR HUGH.

Married? Married to whom?

AMY.

To whom? Ah! that name must not leave my lips. I have promised — nay, sworn —

SIR HUGH.

I have my doubts about a husband whose name his wife cannot pronounce before her father.

AMY.

Once you would have believed my lightest word —

SIR HUGH.

Yes, once.

[*The tolling of the great bell is heard.*

AMY.

Ah, the great bell! At last! He is coming!

SIR HUGH.

Who is coming?

AMY.

My husband, father. Hearken, I cannot name him to you, but you can see him. Do you know by sight any of the lords of Elizabeth's Court?

SIR HUGH.

I have frequented camps more than Courts. Still, I know a few of them, — the Earl of Sussex, the Duke of Rutland, Lord Shrewsbury —

AMY.

Are these all?

SIR HUGH.

This morning I saw the young Marquis of Northampton — and (I was forgetting) the owner of this Castle of Kenilworth, the favourite minister of the Queen, the master of your seducer, Lord Leicester.

AMY (*leading* SIR HUGH *to the glass door of the gallery at the back of the hall*).

Come, my father, retire into that gallery; he whom you will see enter, in a few moments, is the noble and honoured spouse of your Amy.

SIR HUGH (*in a milder tone*).

I must, then, give way to your follies, my daughter.

AMY.

You will not regret it, my father. A last word. In the conversation I am about to have with my husband there may be secrets it would be criminal to betray. Promise, therefore, to so place yourself as to see everything and hear nothing. Do you promise?

SIR HUGH.

On my knightly faith.

[*He enters the gallery.*

SCENE IV.

AMY, *then* VARNEY.

AMY (*alone*).

I am, perhaps, wrong in thus eluding the prohibition of my husband. I shall ask his pardon for it. He will understand that I could not allow my father to suffer

any longer. — Ah, it is he! [*Running to the door.*] My Dudley!

FOSTER (*announcing*).

Sir Richard Varney. [*He retires, enters* VARNEY.

AMY (*surprised*).

You, Master Varney! What does this title mean?

VARNEY.

It is a title her Majesty has been graciously pleased to confer on me to-day.

AMY.

Ah, accept my congratulations. But what brings you here?

VARNEY.

The express order of my master, my lady.

AMY.

I was expecting himself.

VARNEY (*presenting the note*).

He has charged me to hand you this.

AMY (*sadly*).

He will not come!

VARNEY.

Matters of importance — his duties near the Queen —

AMY.

I see that my lord has charged you, sir, with a mission to me. Speak, I listen. Well, why do you hesitate?

VARNEY (*with feigned embarrassment*).

It is because — I do not know — what I shall say may offend you, my lady.

AMY.

Nothing coming from my lord can offend me. Speak, Master Varney.

VARNEY (*aside*).

She will not deign even once to address me as Sir Richard. [*Aloud.*] I am charged, madame, to prepare you for a sad change of fortune.

AMY.

What do you mean?

VARNEY.

You must know, my lady, how inexorable is the will of the august sovereign who wields the sceptre of England.

AMY.

Undoubtedly; and what Englishman does not feel a pride in obeying that glorious Queen who has vowed in presence of all her people to live and die a virgin queen?

VARNEY.

If this double title be the cause of your respect for her Majesty, you must lessen that respect by a full half. The approaching marriage of her Highness is commonly spoken of.

AMY.

Yes, indeed, I now recollect there has been some talk of a Spanish or French prince in this connection. Was not King Philip mentioned? or the Duke of Anjou? or was it not rather the Duke of Alençon?

VARNEY.

You are not correctly informed, my lady. The Queen, who might choose a consort from any of the proudest royal houses in Europe, has deigned to cast her eyes on one of her own subjects.

AMY.

Really! The Duke of Lincoln, perhaps?

VARNEY.

He is a Catholic!

AMY.

Perhaps the Duke of Limerick, then?

VARNEY.

An Irishman!

AMY.

In that case the only one left is the Duke of Rutland.

VARNEY.

He is married, — not that that would be much of an obstacle, either.

AMY.

What is this you have dared to say, sirrah?

VARNEY.

A sad truth, madame, if we look to the requirements of State policy. Crowned heads are not subject to the common law, and marriages that trouble thrones are easily broken.

AMY.

How say you, sir? The throne is but the throne, while marriage is the altar.

VARNEY.

Oh, yes! But then, the altar too —

AMY.

Besides, how doth the marriage of the Queen concern me?

VARNEY.

More than you wot of, my lady. Moreover, my Lord of Rutland is not the bridegroom of whom there is question. Among all our English lords, it is not he who wears the coronet of a duke to whom such grace is likely to be done; it is a simple earl.

AMY.

Good God! what do these threatening words conceal? You announce to me a change of fortune. The Queen is at Kenilworth. My husband gives festivals in her honour. Might it be himself?

VARNEY.

It might be himself, madame.

AMY.

Just Heaven! Dudley, my high-souled, generous Dudley deceive and forsake me! He, a peer of England! Thou liest, false varlet!

VARNEY.

I have said nothing, madame.

AMY.

No, but thou hast let me understand everything. To whom art thou traitor here?

VARNEY.

I said well that my words would offend you, my lady. Ah, this is far too painful. I retire.

AMY (*arresting him*).

No, remain! I would know —

VARNEY.

I have already said too much. My master did not authorize me to reveal everything; quite the contrary!

AMY.

What! What did he wish you to hide? Speak, I bid you!

VARNEY.

Well, then — the Queen — loves the Earl.

AMY (*prostrated*).

She loves him! And he?

VARNEY.

He, madame? How can it be helped? England desires this marriage. France supports it, the rabble carol it in their ballads, the astrologers read it in the heavens, the courtiers in the eyes of the Queen, and the Queen —

AMY.

And the Queen — finish! — in the eyes of Leicester.

VARNEY.

I did not speak of my lord.

AMY.

But I speak of him! What does my lord think, what does he do?

VARNEY.

What does he think? Only God knows that. What does he do? He hardly knows himself yet. Still, the love of a queen, and of a queen who can make him a king! the need of ever climbing when one has one's foot on the ladder of ambition! of losing all or winning all, — the throne or the abyss! And then to reject a couch which a royal canopy surmounts!

AMY.

I understand!

[*She falls overwhelmed into a chair.*

Marriages that trouble thrones are easily broken, you said? Ah, Leicester, why this profanation? What doth it profit thee to offend God by a divorce and men by a perjury? Dost thou then think I could live after I had lost thy love? Go to! go to! Let sorrow have her way. Thy ambition shall not have long to wait for its freedom!

VARNEY (*aside*).

It begins to work!

AMY (*rising, seized with a sudden thought*).

Ah, but I think only of myself, — and my father? I think only of my love, — and my honour? Once I believed a time would come when I could fling myself on my father's bosom, a proud and happy daughter, loved and respected by her husband. I shall go back to him abandoned like a mistress, dismissed like a servant, without having been for one day, for one hour, acknowledged as a lawful wife.

[*Hiding her head in her hands.*

O the shame of it!

VARNEY (*with feigned timidity*).

If I might venture a word, my lady, I think I could point a means by which you might cease to be Countess of Leicester without ceasing to be a lawful wife.

AMY (*looking at him in astonishment*).

How? I do not understand you, sir.

VARNEY.

If, at the very time when the Earl of Leicester, hurried on by the irresistible bent of his ambition, aban-

dons a treasure grander than all the royalties of the earth, a man were to present himself before you, — a man less brilliant but more trustworthy, — who offered you, instead of a title, illustrious indeed, but which you wear only at the price of secrecy and misconstruction, an honourable name, an alliance proudly proclaimed in the face of the world; if this man —

AMY (*interrupting, and restraining herself*).

Pardon me! You are, if I mistake not, speaking of yourself, Master Varney?

VARNEY.

Well, madame, I am; and I venture to lay at your feet, instead of the selfish and fickle heart you are losing, a deep and devoted love, — a love that would value a single glance of your eyes higher than the smiles of all the queens of earth.

AMY.

And so you offer to make me Dame Varney?

VARNEY.

No, Lady Varney; for such is the title the wife of Sir Richard Varney shall bear, who is no longer an equerry of the Earl of Leicester, but a free knight of the realm of England.

AMY.

But surely you cannot think I may change my name and condition in such easy and simple fashion?

VARNEY.

On the contrary, I do. In the eyes of many, even in those of your father, I am reputed the fortunate person to whom you have given your heart. Permit me, while anxiously awaiting the hour that crowns my happiness,

to beg of you to let appearances outstrip reality for the nonce. Her Majesty to-day holds a reception. Let me present you to her as my lawful wife. Accept under —

AMY (*breaking forth*).

Enough! Thou hast unmasked thyself, Richard Varney! So it was to this thy wiles tended, forsooth! Thou wouldst represent Leicester as a traitor to make me one! Thank God! I have seen the snare in time. The desertion with which thou hast threatened me is a lie! This marriage with the Queen, a calumny! Oh, what happiness! Pardon me, my Dudley, for having listened for a moment to this foul-mouthed lackey!

VARNEY.

So you do not believe in the note written and signed by the hand of my lord?

AMY.

I believe that thy treason is twofold, and that thou deceivest us both.

VARNEY.

"All that Varney does, he does by my order and by my will," writes the Earl. It is his will that for his safety and yours I present you to the Queen as my wife.

AMY.

Silence, impostor!

VARNEY.

And beware! His further commands are that if you do not obey, means more violent and terrible —

AMY.

Be still, thou varlet!

VARNEY.

Ah, this is too much! You do not fear, then, to turn my love into hatred? [*Advancing toward her.*] You forget that we are alone, and that you are in my power.

AMY (*alarmed*).

Help! help! my father!

VARNEY (*laughing*).

Your father? Ah, do you imagine that your voice can reach from Kenilworth to Templeton?

AMY.

Father! father! help!

SIR HUGH (*appearing*).

I am here.

VARNEY (*thunderstruck*).

Sir Hugh Robsart!

SCENE V.

The same. SIR HUGH ROBSART.

SIR HUGH.

I am here to answer your call, my child. But, in good truth, there was no need of such precaution and mystery to show me the man who is your husband.

AMY.

You are strangely mistaken, father. This man is not my husband.

SIR HUGH.

He is not your husband! God's blood! Would he refuse —

VARNEY (*quickly*).

Ah, sir, 't would be my greatest happiness and honour to make your daughter my wife. The difficulty does not rest with me.

SIR HUGH.

What? Doth it rest with you, Amy? You must —

AMY.

Father, one single word —

SIR HUGH.

Interrupt not thy father! Bootless to say, I would have preferred for the ancient house of Robsart an alliance with one of older lineage. But Sir Richard Varney is now a knight, and may look for higher advancement, seeing that his master, the all-powerful Earl of Leicester, may be to-morrow the husband of Elizabeth, and King of England.

AMY.

God! What do you say? Leicester? Are you sure?

SIR HUGH.

Did you not know it? I but repeat the universal report.

AMY (*staggering*).

It was true, then! Dudley! O my God!

[*She sinks into a chair.*

SIR HUGH (*running up to her*).

Daughter! She is fainting!

VARNEY (*calling*).

Foster! Janet! [JANET *enters hurriedly.*] Look, your mistress is ill.

JANET (*running to* AMY).

My lady! [*She holds a flask to her nostrils.*

VARNEY (*to* SIR HUGH).

Allow her to come to herself, sir. Her mind, you see, is disturbed. Your presence moves and agitates her.

SIR HUGH.

Yet to leave her thus!

VARNEY.

You shall return, my revered father, when she is in a better condition to listen to you.

SIR HUGH (*looking tenderly at* AMY).

Poor child! Well, I leave.

VARNEY.

Permit me to accompany you. [*Aside.*] And now to find Alasco.

[SIR HUGH *and* VARNEY *go out together.*

SCENE VI.

AMY, JANET.

JANET.

My lady!—my dear mistress! Ah, she opens her eyes.

AMY (*looking earnestly round her*).

My father! Where is he?

JANET.

He will return. You feel better, do you not?

AMY.

Yes, child, yes; I am well. But leave me for a time, Janet, leave me. I need to be alone. Yet stay.

[*Drawing off her bracelets and necklace.*

Take these jewels with you. They weigh me down now!

JANET (*after replacing the jewels in the casket*).

My lady need only call, I shall not be far.

AMY (*alone. She remains motionless for some time and without speaking. She gazes round her with haggard eyes*).

Am I, then, in a dream? Is what Varney said possible? Is it really true? The crime of Dudley is confirmed by the voice of my father! Alas! I am now of such little account in this world, my place therein is so little regarded that men speak before me of that which tortures my soul as an indifferent, or even pleasant, bit of gossip! And so, to-morrow, perhaps to-morrow, there will be no longer, even though death be not one of the guests at Kenilworth, an Earl and Countess of Leicester! He — will be King of England. And I —

[JANET *enters with a silver goblet on a silver-gilt salver.*

JANET.

Madame! — my lady!

AMY (*turning round abruptly*).

What is wanted! Leave me!

[*She recognizes* JANET *and continues gently.*

It is thou, Janet! Ah! pardon me —

JANET.

Madame, you are too good to be so unhappy.

AMY.

Yes, very unhappy, dear child! But what dost thou bring me there?

JANET

A soothing potion Foster has bid me take you; it is a composing draught which must needs give you a little rest after all your sufferings.

AMY.

Rest, Janet! There is none for me now, except in the tomb. But put it on the table, and go.

JANET.

Will you drink, my lady?

AMY.

Yes, I will drink. Go, go, my child.

JANET (*aside*).

How pale she is, for a countess!

[*She places the salver on the table near* AMY *and leaves.*

SCENE VII.

AMY, *then* FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

AMY (*alone*).

Innocent, simple people, who believe that the wounds of the soul can be cured by the medicaments of the body! that despair is but a disease, and sleep can be restored to eyes that can no longer weep! Little ser-

vice can this potion do me, in good sooth! Yet my faithful servants have said to themselves when preparing it: "It will do good to our poor mistress!" Shall I, then, slight their affection? There are but these two hearts in the whole world that feel any love for me, — but this poor maiden and my warder, Foster, who feel compassion for the Countess of Leicester! Since they, at least, have my interest at heart, I owe them the return of showing myself grateful for their cares. I will drink.

[*She takes the goblet and raises it to her lips.*

A VOICE (*apparently from the interior of the wall*).

Do not drink!

AMY (*stopping*).

Who speaks to me?

[*The door of* ALASCO *opens and gives entrance to* FLIBBERTIGIBBET, *who with a bound places himself in front of the Countess.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I, noble lady. Do not drink.

AMY (*astonished*).

You! Who are you?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Do you not recognize the poor imp whose life you saved?

AMY.

Ah, it is you! But were you not in prison?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes, in Mervyn's Tower, behind bolts and bars, in a frightful dungeon, which you reach by a parlous gallery, the floor of which sounds terribly hollow.

AMY.

You have been able to escape, then?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Despite my nimbleness as a goblin, I don't think I could have wrought such a miracle as that. No, I was released by an older devil, whose earthly name is Alasco. There is a secret passage running through the wall which leads from my cell to his laboratory. Oh, don't imagine it was the kindness of this worthy Alasco that prompted him to free me! He did so on certain conditions. One was that I should undertake the delicate task of putting you to sleep. And the nature of the sleep? I am ignorant of it. I could only catch the gist of a few words during a rapid dialogue between your Varney and my Alasco. Varney had come in search of a draught ordered by the Earl of Leicester, and intended for the Countess. 'T was all I could learn.

AMY.

But what is the nature of this draught?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

There can be no mistake about that. It comes from the kitchen of Alasco. It must be poison.

AMY.

Poison! and is it Leicester that sends it?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes; he gave the order to have that draught composed for you.

AMY.

Pardon me, O my God!

[*She again takes the goblet and raises it quickly to her lips.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*arresting her arm*).

What are you doing, madame? It is poison, I tell you! Did you not hear me?

AMY.

Yes, I have heard you; but since Leicester sends this poison, I must drink it.

[*She raises the goblet anew to her lips.* FLIBBERTIGIBBET *snatches it from her.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

No! you once saved my life, and it is my turn now! To hell with this devil's broth!

[*He dashes the goblet on the ground.*

You shall see this floor grow as black before an hour, as if Beelzebub himself had breathed on it.

AMY (*gazing fixedly on the spilt liquid*).

What have you done, and what is going to become of me, now that I have no more poison?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Become of you, noble lady? By the genius of Shakespeare! between a husband who seeks to divorce you by poison and a Varney who is hankering after you, there is but one course by immemorial usage in all tragedies, comedies, and pantomimes, — flight!

AMY.

Why should I fly, and where?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Eh! Have you no family? — a brother, or a father?

AMY.

My father! Yes, you are right, my father! Ah, surely now I am released from my oath! I will tell all to my father! I shall at least die justified and pardoned. Yes, let us fly! But how?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

By this window, which is hardly a story above the trees of the park. Yesterday I wanted to frighten Alasco, through the window, and did so by means of a ladder, which I afterwards hid in the thicket. [*Leaning out of the window*]. It is there still. You can easily descend with my help. It is mere child's play, madame!

AMY.

I consent. Make haste, then; I am in a hurry to meet my father!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Wait! Are you forgetting nothing?

[*He takes the cloak lying on the back of the chair.*

This cloak. [*Looking at the table.*] What is this parchment? A pass from the Queen! Heavenly powers! We must not leave behind us this precious viaticum!

[*He hides the parchment in his bosom.*

Now, come, come, madame!

AMY.

May God watch over us!

[FLIBBERTIGIBBET *aids her in stepping from the casement.*

ACT IV.

SCENE. — *Kenilworth Park. At the back, in the distance, the roofs of the new castle are seen through the trees. On the right, the Fountain of Neptune.*

SCENE I.

AMY; FLIBBERTIGIBBET, *entering abruptly.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Your flight has been discovered, madame. Alasco and Foster are searching for you in the woods. Fortunately, one is old and the other dull-witted, and this bushy, rolling corner of the park is wonderfully well-adapted for a game of hide-and-seek.

AMY.

But I must have some information; I must know where to find my father.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

If I could leave you alone an instant, I would soon bring Sir Hugh Robsart to you. But take care! There are people coming in this direction! Good heavens! 't is the Earl of Leicester with his worthy equerry!

AMY (*bitterly*).

Leicester and Varney! the two conspirators!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Come, madame, come! All is lost if they see us!

[*He hurries her into the coppice on the right.*

SCENE II.

LEICESTER, VARNEY.

LEICESTER.

Speak quick! The Queen has nearly finished her walk along the lake. I am in a hurry to join her.

VARNEY (*violently excited*).

My lord, you were a witness that I was able to make the Queen understand that my wife was very sick and in no fit condition to be presented to her Majesty. Well, I have just learned that the Countess has fled! It is worse than resistance, my lord, it is rebellion.

LEICESTER (*thoughtful*).

I cannot impute this resistance as a crime to her, Varney; or, if it were a crime, it was a crime of love.

VARNEY.

But, my lord, the Countess exposes you to the danger of being charged with falsehood —

LEICESTER.

She has ever walked in the path of honour and loyalty. That path must be mine too, Varney, and not the one you would have me tread.

VARNEY.

The road in which you are leads to greatness, to supreme power.

LEICESTER.

Yes, by falsehood and treason.

VARNEY.

Ah, my lord, it is now too late to retreat. Elizabeth, blinded by her own passion rather than by you, has shown a want of self-restraint that, while it permits you to hope everything, ought to make you fear everything. The day on which she opens her eyes, the awaking will be terrible. Bethink you what the fury of an outraged woman can do when that woman is a queen. Take care! It is not your lands and honours merely that are at stake, it is your life! And the safety of the Countess is worth as little as yours. The Queen might spare the man whom she loves; would she spare the rival whom she abhors?

LEICESTER.

It is just this danger to Amy that makes me pause. I must, at all cost, defend and save her.

VARNEY.

And how? A subject cannot struggle with his Queen.

LEICESTER (*reflecting*).

No, and I will not make the attempt. But to-morrow, perhaps, the Queen will be no longer at Kenilworth. Then —

VARNEY (*in terror*).

Great God! my lord, you are not thinking of leaving England! You will not, good my lord, by exile fling to the winds the most brilliant fortune that man has ever dreamed of!

LEICESTER.

A fortune with which yours is closely bound, is it not, Master Varney? However, I reckon on your devotion —

VARNEY.

My lord!

LEICESTER.

Well, well, let the Countess be sought for, — not to take her away from here, but that I may have discourse with her. Let us now go to the Queen. [*He goes out.*

VARNEY (*following him, aside*).

If he leave the country I am a ruined man! If he see the Countess I am a dead man! [*He joins* LEICESTER.

SCENE III.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET, AMY, *then* VARNEY.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*coming out of the thicket and following* LEICESTER *and* VARNEY *with his eyes*).

They are going away. You can come out safely from your fortress of briar. But take care of your beautiful eyes, for never have I seen branches more disposed to caress them than those, with their thorns too. [AMY *appears.*]

AMY.

To think that I am actually hiding from Leicester as from an enemy!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

And I go now to seek your natural protector against this enemy, — your father. Do you keep quiet in the angle of that fountain. Should necessity require, you can easily reach the coppice from it.

[*He conducts her to the fountain.* VARNEY *appears at the back.*

VARNEY (*aside*).

I really think I saw Flibbertigibbet. [*Seeing* AMY.] Ah, the Countess! What would it be wise to do?

What if I dared? 'T would be a very bold stroke! But audacity has helped me so far, and I am in such extreme peril that I must risk all to save all. [*He retires.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*to* AMY).

Wait for me here, my lady. Before a quarter of an hour I shall return with Sir Hugh. [*He goes out.*

AMY (*alone*).

I deserted my father for my husband, and now I have but one single idea, — to leave my husband for my father. Leicester, is it possible that after trying to pass me off as the wife of thy lackey, thou hast wished to poison me? Alas! he who can commit a base act can also commit a crime! Where now is the great Earl, the noble Dudley? All is over between us. There is not in my soul one spark of love for him; it has been extinguished by my scorn. I do not even hate him.

[*She sits down, pale and motionless, on the shaft of a column, near the fountain. The Queen appears.*

SCENE IV.

ELIZABETH, AMY.

ELIZABETH (*reading a note*).

What means this mysterious summons? "Let the Queen come alone to the Fountain of Neptune." Well, I am here. [*Discovering* AMY.] Who is this woman?

AMY.

The Queen! O heaven! the Queen, it is the Queen!

ELIZABETH.

What is that? Woman, what art thou doing here?

AMY.

Your Majesty — I was passing by. I beg leave to withdraw —

ELIZABETH.

No, speak. Thou dost seem disturbed and almost fainting. Take courage, girl, thou art in presence of thy Queen.

AMY.

Madame, 't is why I tremble.

ELIZABETH.

Take courage, I say! Hast thou any grace to beg of us?

AMY.

Madame — I beg your protection, madame.

[*She falls on her knees before the Queen.*

ELIZABETH.

Each daughter of our realm hath right thereto while she is worthy of it. Stand up and come to thy right mind. Why, and in what, dost thou crave our protection?

AMY.

Madame — I cannot tell! Alas! I know not.

ELIZABETH.

Why, this is mere folly, girl. We are not accustomed to ask questions so oft without receiving an answer!

AMY.

I entreat, — I implore your Majesty, — let me be restored to my father.

ELIZABETH.

But I must first know this father of thine. Who art thou? Who is he?

AMY.

I am Amy, daughter to Sir Hugh Robsart.

ELIZABETH.

Robsart! In good sooth, I have, for two days, been much busied anent the affairs of this family. The girl asks me for her father, the father asks me for his daughter. Thou dost not yet say all that thou art. Art married?

AMY.

Married! O God! then you know all, madame? Yes, it is true! Forgive me! forgive me in the name of Heaven, most gracious lady!

ELIZABETH.

Forgive thee, girl? Eh! for what should I forgive thee? That is the concern of the father thou hast deceived. Thou seest I know all thy story; thy blush avouches it for true. Thou hast let thyself be seduced, carried off —

AMY (*proudly*).

Yes, madame; but the man who seduced and carried me off was my husband.

ELIZABETH.

In truth, I know thou hast repaired thy fault by marrying thy ravisher, — the equerry Varney.

AMY.

Varney! Oh, no, madame, no! As there is a heaven above me, I am not the degraded wretch you would

make me! I am not the wife of that contemptible villain Varney!

ELIZABETH.

What! what does this mean? Methinks, wench, thou canst talk fast enough when the subject liketh thee! [*As if to herself.*] Of whom am I the dupe here? There is some shameful mystery or other under this. [*Aloud.*] Amy Robsart, it was in the presence of the noble Earl of Leicester, his master, that Varney declared himself thy husband —

AMY (*sadly*).

In presence of the Earl —

ELIZABETH.

Yes. But tell me, woman, whom hast thou married? Tell me — for by God's light I will know — whose wife or whose paramour art thou? Come, speak out, and be speedy! for thou wert better dally with a lioness than palter with Elizabeth of England.

AMY.

Ask the Earl of Leicester; he knows the truth.

ELIZABETH.

Leicester! The Earl of Leicester! Woman, thou dost belie him! Who has set thee on to this odious falsehood? Who has suborned thee to slander the noblest lord and truest-hearted gentleman of our realm? Come with me instantly. — But here he is himself in search of us. [*Raising her voice.*] This way! this way! Were he closer to us than our right hand, thou shalt be confronted with him, thou shalt be heard in his presence that I may know if there be in all England any man so distraught as to lie to the face of Harry VIII.'s daughter!

SCENE V.

AMY, ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, VARNEY, *all the Court.* ELIZABETH, *her eyes fixed on* LEICESTER; AMY, *pale and fainting.*

LEICESTER (*aside with a terrified gesture*).

O Heaven! Amy, with the Queen!

ELIZABETH (*aside*).

How pale he looks! [*Aloud.*] My Lord of Leicester, knowest thou this woman?

LEICESTER (*in a low voice*).

Madame —

ELIZABETH (*violently*).

Knowest thou this woman, my Lord of Leicester?

LEICESTER.

Your Majesty will permit me to explain —

ELIZABETH.

Hast thou dared to practise a deception on me, — on me, thy benefactress, thy confiding and too partial sovereign? Thy present confusion doth seem to avouch thy treason. If 't is so, by all that is holy, false Earl, thy perfidy shall meet its due reward!

LEICESTER (*dejected*).

I have never wished to deceive you, madame.

ELIZABETH.

Silence, my lord! That head of thine standeth in as great peril as ever did thy father's!

AMY (*aside*).

O God! —

LEICESTER (*drawing himself up proudly and speaking in a firm voice*).

My head, my sovereign liege, cannot fall but by the sentence of my peers. At the imperial bar of the parliament of England will I plead my cause, and not to a princess who thus requites my faithful service. The sceptre of your Majesty is not a fairy's wand to build a scaffold in a day.

ELIZABETH.

What! My lords, you have heard! We are defied, I think, braved in the very castle we have bestowed on this proud man! My Lord of Shrewsbury, you are Earl Marshal of England. Attach him of high treason.

AMY (*aside*).

O my God! I thought I no longer loved him!

ELIZABETH.

Raise not thy head so haughtily, Earl of Leicester. Our father of glorious memory hath ever caused those heads to fall that listed not to bend. Good cousin of Hunsdon, order out your band of gentlemen pensioners, and take the traitor into instant custody. Take from him his sword, and be speedy about it. We have spoken. [HUNSDON *draws his sword; three gentlemen advance toward* LEICESTER, *who stands calm and motionless.*

AMY (*running and throwing herself at the feet of the Queen*).

No, no, madame! Pardon! justice! He is not guilty! he is not guilty! No man can accuse in aught the noble Earl of Leicester!

ELIZABETH.

Well, in good sooth, wench, this is a marvel! Didst thou, thyself, not accuse him an instant ago? Hast thou, then, belied him?

AMY.

Did I accuse him, madame? Ah! if I did, then, of a truth have I belied him, and I alone deserve your anger.

ELIZABETH.

Beware, insensate woman that thou art! Didst not thou, thyself, say, a moment ago, that I had but to question thee to discover that the Earl of Leicester was privy to thy whole history?

AMY.

I did not know what I was saying, madame; they practised on my life, I was mistaken, my reason was upset —

ELIZABETH.

Who then is thy husband, or thy paramour, Amy Robsart, if as thou hast just now affirmed thou art not the wife of Varney?

LEICESTER (*advancing*).

I must confess to your Majesty —

ELIZABETH.

My lord, let the woman speak.

AMY.

Madame! [*Aside.*] O heaven! [*Aloud.*] Yes, madame, I am the wife of Varney!

LEICESTER (*aside*).

My self-devoted Amy! Ah, if in endangering myself I did not endanger her as well!

ELIZABETH.

And so thou dost confess, young woman, that all the disorder of which thou art witness has been caused by thine impudent lies and silly imposture? Dost thou admit thou camest hither with intent to slander the illustrious Earl of Leicester, and ruin him in our esteem?

AMY.

It seems I must admit it.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Ah, her devotion rends my heart. [*Aloud.*] Beseech your Majesty, deign to hear me —

ELIZABETH (*smiling*).

In an instant, dear my lord, pray you. Let us have the pleasure of seeing your innocence established without your aid. Your enemies have suborned this wretched creature. Allow us to question her.

VARNEY (*advancing*).

Gracious lady, she is not as guilty as seemeth to your Majesty. I had hoped her misfortune might have remained concealed. But the Queen must have perceived that her reason hath lost its balance, and —

LEICESTER (*aside*).

Wretch!

AMY (*aside*).

It behooves me to endure the sacrifice to the bitter end.

ELIZABETH.

By my troth, Sir Richard Varney, I rather lean to the belief that thy master's enemies have used thy wife as a tool wherewith to weaken his standing in our regard,

though they have but strengthened it withal. Let this woman be led to the prison of the tower, until we take further thought as to her disposal. Lord Hunsdon, to you I commit the prisoner. Have her strictly watched, and give orders that no one — not even the lord of this castle — have approach to her, unless he have a safe-conduct signed by our own hand. You hear, my lord.

[LORD HUNSDON *bows and takes away* AMY.

LEICESTER (*aside*).

O misery! mine own beloved Amy!

AMY.

At least, if I die now, 't will be for him!

ACT V.

SCENE.— *Interior of the round tower of the dungeons. Old Norman architecture. A cone-shaped roof. In centre of back an iron door; to the right of this door, a small grated window. On the left a couch. An immense piece of timber, serving as a support for the base of the roof, crosses the tower in the upper part.*

SCENE I.

AMY *alone, seated on the couch, pale, her hair in disorder.*

AMY.

The sacrifice is finished! I do not know how it is I have become almost a State criminal, seeing that my only faults have sprung from my love. The Queen is my rival! the Queen! and her anger will not touch me except to some dread purpose. To-day the prison; to-morrow — Dudley, they told me thou didst wish to take my life. I will anticipate that wish of thine and give it to thee freely. For thee the throne, for me the grave. I shall vanish, and thou remain with this Elizabeth who is a queen. O dismal thought! when she thrills in his embrace I shall be lying stretched on my lonely and icy couch in the tomb! O agony! How bitter and harrowing is jealousy to one about to die!

[*She hides her head in her hands and weeps. At this moment a door on the right in the wall, hidden by some carved work, opens; it turns noiselessly on its hinges, allowing* FLIBBERTIGIBBET *to enter, and then closes of itself in the same manner.* FLIBBERTIGIBBET *advances slowly a few steps, and then stands in front of* AMY, *who has not lifted her eyes.*

SCENE II.

AMY, FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

AMY (*without seeing* FLIBBERTIGIBBET).

And is not this dungeon itself death? Am I not out of reach of the living world? Where is the ear that could hear my voice? Where is the hand that could touch mine?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*without changing his posture*).

Here.

AMY.

Who is there?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Flibbertigibbet, at your service.

AMY.

You! Are you, then, in very truth, a sorcerer or a goblin that you have been able to enter this impenetrable prison, and that too, may Heaven pardon you for it, without a door being open?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Unfortunately, God has nothing to forgive me in this matter, noble lady.

AMY.

But how have you entered?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

By the way which you shall leave by.

AMY.

I cannot understand —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

It is very simple.

[*He points to the concealed door.*

There is a door there.

AMY.

Indeed? Where does it lead to?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I have already told you. It leads by a secret stair to the laboratory of Alasco, and from thence to the chamber whence you have escaped once, and whence, with the help of God or the devil, you shall escape a second time. But make haste! By some lucky chance or other, Alasco has gone out. He may return at any moment, and then escape would be difficult. Come, madame, come.

[*He takes a step toward the secret door.*

AMY.

I thank thee, my poor friend, but I cannot follow thee.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

What?

AMY.

Hie thee away at once! If thou wert discovered here —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes, I am so anxious about myself! But you?

AMY.

I remain.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*stamping*).

Oh, now, this is too bad! Do you think I have come here for the purpose of going away as I came? Do you think I am going to leave you here in this cold, damp atmosphere with the owls and bats, with cobwebs about your bed and jailers at your door, while outside the air is

pure and free, and plain, forest and river delight the eye? If you wished me to let you die in this cell, why did you save my life?

AMY.

I cannot help it, my friend. Am I not condemned to death by him to whom my life and soul belong? Though I were at liberty, what could I do with my freedom? Is not Dudley unfaithful to me? Has not Dudley desired to poison me? Has not Dudley abandoned me to his Varney? Is not Dudley about to wed Elizabeth?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Tush, tush! that is an old story, madame. The scene has changed. Your Dudley is not unfaithful, he has not attempted to poison you, he never thought of giving you up to his equerry, Devil-Varney, and, far from intending to wed the Queen, he is, at this moment, plotting an act of high treason, — namely, your rescue.

AMY (*clasping her hands*).

Could this be possible? Are you telling the truth?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

It was Varney alone who planned everything, who, in fact, concocted the whole plot.

AMY.

Ah, it is, then, as I thought at first! O my Dudley, how much I have wronged thee!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

That is not all; your father knows of the marriage, and has been reconciled to your husband. Both are now adopting means to save you; they are, perhaps, both waiting for you outside. Will you still stay here? Will you keep them waiting?

AMY.

Oh, no! quick! quick! Lead me at once to my lord! lead me to my father!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! The bolt is drawn! Let us lose not a second! Follow me!

[*He runs to the concealed door and tries to open it; it resists. He makes a fresh attempt; it is useless. The door neither moves nor opens. He turns in consternation to* AMY *who has been looking on, trembling.*

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Shut! The door is shut and bolted on the outside! Alasco and Varney have returned. That room which they left vacant was a snare.

AMY.

And so you are lost on account of your attempt to save me. Hapless wretch that I am, my misfortune is contagious.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Beseech your ladyship, do not speak of me! I have nothing to lose. It is you who lose everything!

AMY.

Yes, I am again plunged back into the night of my dungeon! The last glimmer of hope is quenched.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*drawing himself up*).

The last? Not so, dear and noble lady! We must never despair. Your father and husband are at this moment taking measures for your safety. I wonder if I might see them from the window.

[*He brings a wooden stool to the casement, mounts it, and stands on tip-toe in order to see the outside.*

The sun is descending behind the trees of the park. We have but a quarter of an hour of daylight. Ah! what do I see yonder in the shadow of the twilight? Two men muffled in cloaks. They are coming toward the tower. They are stopping at the foot of the wall. They are measuring it with their eyes. Madame, it is they! My lady, it is they!

AMY.

They? Who?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Your father! your husband!

AMY.

My husband! my father! Are you not mistaken? Let me look!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Look, madame.

[*He leaps down from the stool.*

AMY (*taking his place at the window*).

Ah, my God! It is, it is my husband! my Dudley! Ah, how hard it is to see through these bars! [*Calling.*] Husband! father!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

The tower is too high for them to hear you. But shake your handkerchief, they may, perhaps, see it.

[AMY *waves her handkerchief outside the bars.*

AMY.

Yes, yes, they see it; they raise their hats. But [*sadly*] I see them and they cannot see me!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

No matter! they are warned and will deliver you.

AMY (*shaking her head*).

Deliver me!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Yes, surely. What doors do not open before the lord of this castle? He has power and he has gold.

AMY.

That will not suffice to-day. He cannot enter the tower. Thou knowest not, my poor friend, what are the orders of the Queen? No one can enter here,—no one.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

What! not even the Earl of Leicester, the all-powerful minister?

AMY.

He less than any other. No one enters, I tell you, unless he have a safe-conduct signed by the hand of the Queen.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Good! Then it is a royal pass that is wanted?

AMY.

Undoubtedly.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET (*drawing a parchment from his pocket*).

Here it is, madame.

AMY (*taking the parchment*).

What! the Queen's signature! Now, once for all, this must be magic!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hardly even foresight. I found this talisman yesterday on your table.

AMY.

Ah, yes, I remember! My father's pass.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I have done well not to forget it, as he did. Quick now, madame; wave your handkerchief again, and throw the parchment to your rescuers.

AMY (*waving her handkerchief*).

They have seen the signal.

[*She throws the parchment.*

May God guide it safely to its destination!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Follow its course with your eyes. What is happening to it?

AMY.

It is falling. It whirls about. It is now above the trees.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Pray God it do not nest in one of them!

AMY.

No, it is still falling. Ah, it is now on the ground before them.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Have they seen it?

AMY.

They have!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

We are saved!

AMY.

My Dudley is kissing the parchment. He is making me a sign. They are both making for the postern. The angle of the wall hides them from me. I no longer see them.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

But you shall see them soon again, and very near, noble lady.

AMY (*descending from the window*).

Blessed be God! [*She looks at her disordered garb.*
He will soon arrive. In what a condition I am to receive him! My gown quite rumpled, my hair in disorder —

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

A good sign, that! Sorrow is giving way to vanity! But I think I hear something or other walking.

[*He listens at the iron door.*
It is the tread of men. How is it that the floor of that corridor sounds so hollow?

[*The sound of a key turning in the lock is heard.*
They are opening it, madame, they are opening it!

[*The door at the back opens. Enter* SIR HUGH *and* LEICESTER.

SCENE III.

The same. LEICESTER, SIR HUGH.

AMY (*rushing into the arms of* LEICESTER).

My lord!

LEICESTER (*pressing her to his heart*).

My beloved!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

A moment ago she was as pale as a corpse, and now she is as rosy as a bride! These young women change colour oftener and faster than the Star of Aldebaran.

LEICESTER.

You must be wroth with me, Amy. How shall I ever expiate the wrongs I have done you? Say that you forgive me!

AMY (*still hanging on his arm*).

Ah, it is thy part to forgive, noble Earl! Why did I dare to suspect thee? [*Turning to* SIR HUGH.] And you too, my father, have you forgiven me? Do you forgive?

SIR HUGH (*holding both her hands clasped in his*).

My child! My daughter!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Meanwhile, as the door is open, why do we delay?

LEICESTER.

He is right. Time is precious. Listen, darling; everything is prepared for my escape and thine. In an hour a carriage shall be waiting for us in the wood. Trusted friends, among them Strathallan, the Earl of Fife, will protect our flight. A brig, ready to sail for Flanders, will receive us on the coast; and before daylight dawns, we shall be sailing together, free, wafted to happiness by favouring breezes, — thou far from thy prison, I far from the Court!

AMY.

What! my lord, dost thou, for my sake, abandon rank and honours, power and fortune, and that brilliant theatre on which thou wert the admired of all Europe? What sacrifices you make for a poor woman!

LEICESTER.

This poor woman, as you call her, has made many for me.

AMY.

You condemn yourself to exile!

LEICESTER.

Art thou not my country?

AMY.

Dudley, thou renouncest everything.

LEICESTER.

Nay, rather nothing, since thou art everything for Dudley.

AMY.

Who knows? Perhaps even a throne?

LEICESTER.

A throne? Go to! By leaving the Queen to follow thee, I renounce, something tells me, the chance of climbing, not the steps of a throne, but the ladder of a scaffold!

SIR HUGH.

My lord, forget not that while you speak, this imperious Queen is waiting for you.

LEICESTER.

Yes, we must leave thee awhile, dear wife!

AMY.

Why so? Do you not lead me with you?

LEICESTER.

Not yet. In an hour the Queen quits Kenilworth. At this moment her retinue fills every part of the castle, and thy escape would be impossible. I go to hold her

stirrup, and when she leaves I shall return here. Kenilworth will then be deserted, and by favour of the friendly night, I shall carry thee off from this hideous dungeon.

AMY.

It will be the second time you have carried me off, my lord. Ah, forgive me, father!

LEICESTER (*to* FLIBBERTIGIBBET).

Do thou, lad, follow us. I shall have need of thy service in arranging matters when I am in attendance on the Queen.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

I am at your orders, my lord.

AMY.

Am I, then, to be again alone?

LEICESTER.

For an hour, at most, my beloved!

AMY (*hanging on his neck*).

Dost thou remember, my lord, it was by the sound of thy horn thou didst give warning of thy presence in the woods of Devon in the early days of our love? Well, to please me, wilt thou announce thy return this evening in the same fashion?

LEICESTER.

I promise thee to do so; meanwhile, be happy and without fear. Farewell.

AMY.

Farewell.

[*They embrace. The Earl goes out with* SIR HUGH *and* FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

SCENE IV.

AMY (*alone*).

Farewell! — There is something ominous in that word; it is as if they who uttered it bade each other meet in eternity and not till then.

[*She sits on the couch and muses.*

They are now far away; I no longer hear their footsteps. I am once more alone. I know not why it is, but sad thoughts come trooping to assail me. Am I not about to be happy? Nay, am I not happy now? Am I not about to be free, — free to see him, to hear him, free to love him? Oh! mind and body are both sick unto death; the emotions of this day have crushed all my energy. Would it not be well to snatch a few moments' rest before beginning this journey which is to lead me to happiness?

[*Gradually her voice grows weaker and her body seems to be weighed down.*

O my Dudley, what a sweet future is ours! Exile, 't is true; but exile with thee! — some secluded, obscure abode; long days spent near thee, at thy side; a life all freedom and love, — provided that this be not a dream!

[*She falls asleep.*

SCENE V.

VARNEY, ALASCO.

At the moment when AMY *falls asleep, the concealed door half opens.* VARNEY *passes his head through the opening, as if assuring himself that all is safe. After concluding that the Countess is asleep, he enters, lead-*

ing ALASCO *by the hand who appears to follow him with reluctance and impatience.*

VARNEY.

She is asleep. [*To* ALASCO.] Quick! come, I say! come!

ALASCO (*placing a lighted copper lamp on a stool*).

What do you mean by dragging me after you in this fashion? My time is not so worthless that I can afford to waste it in listening at doors in your company. I was busy at a critical moment on my great work. I had three retorts on the furnace, filled with such a perilous substance that were the least drop of it to fall into the fire, this tower would be shattered to pieces.

VARNEY.

Alasco, hast thou heard?

ALASCO.

I was not listening.

VARNEY.

The Earl of Leicester is going to fly, — fly with his wife! and if he succeed in his purpose, in a few hours the favourite will be an exile, and the favourite's equerry shall fall from the point he reached, a hundred times lower than the point from which he started!

ALASCO.

What is that to me!

VARNEY.

What is it to you? The goods of the outlaw will be confiscated, and the domain of Cumnor with the rest. Then, good-bye to thy laboratory, thy alembics, thy pharmacy of philters, thy cookshop of poisons! Now, dost see what it is to you?

ALASCO.

Well, what is the cause of all these mishaps? The escape of this bird. Go, inform Elizabeth of it, and the cage will not open.

VARNEY.

Yes, but it will though! It will open to receive the Earl. Elizabeth will send Leicester to consummate his marriage with Amy on the scaffold. And what shall Varney gain by that?

ALASCO.

The thanks of the Queen for having undeceived her.

VARNEY.

The thanks of the Queen? Say her hatred, rather! I shall inspire her with horror. And even if my good offices escaped punishment, the best I could hope for would be to be forgotten.

ALASCO.

You need not tell her it was Leicester that planned the escape of his wife.

VARNEY.

Then he continues to be the all-powerful favourite, and sooner or later, his vengeance is sure to reach me.

ALASCO.

But then, if every course is bad —

VARNEY (*coming close to* ALASCO).

Not every one! Alasco, if fate laid a heavy hand on this woman, this wretched Amy, who has caused the Earl to do so many foolish things; if she disappeared from the world; if she died — a natural death — how dost thou think it would affect Leicester?

ALASCO.

He would forget her. He would continue the successful minister, the omnipotent favourite, the great Earl who gives festivals and entertainments to the Queen.

VARNEY.

And we too, Alasco, we too would continue our peaceful progress in his train, advancing as he advanced, and finding ourselves earls or barons on the day when he would awaken king.

ALASCO.

Yes, just as you say, — Baron Varney, Prince Demetrius Alasco!

VARNEY.

So there is but one obstacle between us and fortune, — it is the life of this woman.

ALASCO.

And what do you intend doing with the obstacle?

VARNEY.

Remove it!

ALASCO (*with a gesture of terror*).

Oh! I thought you loved this woman?

VARNEY.

She has called me lackey! I hate her. [*Half drawing his dagger.*] To think that an inch of steel in that proud heart would sweep away the impediment that checks the career of so many brilliant destinies!

[*He makes a step towards* AMY.

ALASCO.

Varney! Varney! a stab! 'T will be known as thine!

VARNEY.

Thou 'rt right. Well, hast thou not — hast thou not some elixir, some poison, to even breathe which is death?

ALASCO.

A poisoning! 't will be known as mine!

VARNEY.

Then what is to be done?

ALASCO.

Whatever thou listest. This business likes me not. I care not to meddle with it. A woman! — and a woman in her sleep!

VARNEY.

Thou art a coward!

ALASCO.

And besides, as I told thee already, my crucibles are waiting for me.

VARNEY.

Thou art a madman! [*He appears to be musing for some moments.*] What is to be done? What is to be done? — Ha! a natural death? A death that leaves no trace behind it? [*Striking his forehead.*] By heaven! I have it. Is not this tower the tower of the dungeons? Alasco, the floor of the narrow corridor that leads from this cell has a trap-door outside the very threshold of the door.

ALASCO.

Well!

VARNEY.

Touch a spring and the supports which sustain the trap fall, which, thereupon, keeps its position level with the floor by a slight adhesion, and yet is undistinguished

from it. The slightest pressure on this trap would suffice to hurl her into the abyss beneath.

ALASCO.

Well?

VARNEY.

Now, the Earl has left the door open. Wait for me a moment.

ALASCO.

Where art thou going?

VARNEY.

To press the spring that drops the supports of the trap.

[*He goes out by the door which has remained open, and which half closes in such a way as to hide the corridor.*

ALASCO.

What foul plot is this hell-hound hatching? And my elixirs that are burning away yonder! — Well, Varney!

VARNEY (*returning*).

It is done! Now woe to whoever sets foot on that trap! A touch as light as a sylph's would launch the luckless intruder into eternity!

ALASCO.

Surely thou wilt not seize the prisoner and hurl her into that gulf?

VARNEY (*with a sneering laugh*).

Oh, fie! what brutal fancies thou hast! I will not touch the prisoner.

ALASCO.

Then I don't understand.

VARNEY (*lowering his voice*).

Didst thou not hear the Earl promise to warn his wife of his return by the sound of the horn?

ALASCO.

Well, what follows?

VARNEY.

Follows? Dost thou think that when the captive hears that sound she will have patience to wait until her lord comes here? Dost thou think she will pause an instant before running to meet him? Well, if in her thoughtlessness she pass this door, if the worm-eaten props of the trap give way beneath her, if she fall, how can I help it? Will it be my fault? It will be an unfortunate accident simply.

ALASCO.

To destroy her by means of her best affections! It is a seething of the kid in the mother's milk!

VARNEY.

And now let us retire. The Earl cannot be long now. Return, if thou list, to thy damned crucibles. I will remain on the watch behind the concealed door.

[*They both go out.*

SCENE VI.

AMY (*alone*).

Deep silence reigns in the cell, which is only lit by the copper lamp on the stool, forgotten by ALASCO. *After a few moments' silence and sleep the sound of a horn is heard outside.* AMY *awakes with a start.*

AMY.

What noise was that that woke me? Was it not the sound of my lord's horn? [*She listens.*] Nothing but the wind whistling through the crannies of the wall. 'T was what, perhaps, aroused me. So much the better! I have had a fearful dream.

[*The sound of a horn is again heard.*

Yes, I was not mistaken; it is the horn, it is the signal. [*She runs to the casement.*] Torches, horses, armed men. Yes, it is my Dudley! He alights from his horse, he is helping my father to alight. How handsome he is, my Dudley! Ah, that door is open! I will hie me to meet him, and so spare him the trouble of returning to this prison.

[*She wraps her veil about her and kneels.*

O God, to thy care do I commend myself!

[*The horn resounds for the third time.*

Dudley, I am thine!

[*She takes the lamp, pushes the door open and disappears. When the door falls back to its place a shriek is heard, and a crash like the fall of heavy beams of timber. Then the small door opens and* VARNEY *appears, pale and shuddering.*

SCENE VII.

VARNEY *alone. He enters slowly, with haggard eyes.*

VARNEY.

Is it done? Ay, I heard the crash. No one here. It is done. Well, all is over! Beshrew thee, Varney, art thou afraid? [*With a horrible chuckle.*] The lamb hath fallen into the pit of the wolf, is that a cause for trembling? If I were to see —

[*Advances to the door, then starts back and returns.*

To see? What boots me seeing? I have heard. It is enough. Rejoice, Richard Varney, from this hour dates thy fortune!

[*Suddenly a great noise is heard behind the concealed door. It opens violently. A red, flickering glimmer is seen, and* Alasco, *deadly pale, rushes with a cry of horror on the stage.*

SCENE VIII.

Varney, Alasco.

ALASCO.

Ah, woe to us, Varney!

VARNEY.

Alasco! What aileth thee, pray?

ALASCO.

Ill betide us! A curse is on our works!

VARNEY.

What?

ALASCO.

Varney, my alembic hath exploded, the tower is half fallen and the castle on fire!

VARNEY.

What sayest thou, thou wretch? The castle on fire?

ALASCO.

Look!

[*The glare gradually grows stronger. The flames are heard hissing outside.*

VARNEY.

Great God!

ALASCO.

We have no time to lose. The conflagration is travelling fast. Let us fly!

VARNEY.

Yes, let us fly!

[*They run to the iron door.* ALASCO *pushes it and recoils appalled before the open gulf on the threshold.*

ALASCO.

Devil! what abyss is this?

VARNEY.

It is the trap of the dungeons.

ALASCO.

A gulf impossible to cross! Flight or safety is impossible. On one side, this chasm; on the other, fire! Death! death! there is only death!

VARNEY.

'T is thy fault, poisoner!

ALASCO.

'T is thine, assassin!

VARNEY (*pointing to the blaze*).

Who caused that fire?

ALASCO (*showing the open trap*).

Who opened yon gulf?

[*The conflagration makes rapid progress, the flames come through the concealed door, the roof splits, the wall cracks, sparks fall thick as hail from the pinnacle of*

the tower. At this moment FLIBBERTIGIBBET *passes through a breach in the roof and appears standing on the transversal beam of timber beneath.*

SCENE IX.

VARNEY, ALASCO, FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Varney! Alasco!

VARNEY.

Who calls? Is it hell?

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Hell is content to wait for you. Reproach not one another! 'T is I who have caused the explosion of the alembic. 'T is I who punish ye.

VARNEY.

Ah, thou accursed imp of the devil!

FLIBBERTIGIBBET.

Fiends who murdered an angel! Follow ye her into yonder gulf. Ye shall not follow her farther!

[*He disappears through the opening in the roof, which sinks, and buries* VARNEY *and* ALASCO *beneath it.*

THE END.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
MARY TUDOR	1
RUY BLAS	123
TORQUEMADA	277
ESMERALDA	425

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

RUY BLAS.

	Page
Don Cæsar makes his Appearance	*Frontispiece*
The Entrance of the Queen	162
Ruy Blas in the Privy Council Chamber	204
Ruy Blas on his Knees before the Queen	209
Don Cæsar and the Lackey	232

MARY TUDOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Mary, The Queen.
Jane.
Gilbert.
Fabiano Fabiani.
Simon Renard.
Joshua Farnaby.
A Jew.
Lord Clinton.
Lord Chandos.
Lord Montagu.
Master Eneas Dulverton.
Lord Gardiner.
A Jailer.

Lords, Pages, Guardes, the Executioner.

LONDON, 1553.

MARY TUDOR.

FIRST DAY.

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE.

SCENE. — *Border of the Thames. A deserted strand. An old parapet in ruins, conceals the borders of the water. To the right, a house of mean appearance. At the corner of this house, a statuette of the Virgin, at whose feet burns a wick in an iron lattice. In the background, beyond the Thames, London. Two high buildings are seen,— the Tower of London and Westminster. The sun is setting.*

SCENE I.

Several men are grouped here and there on the Strand, among whom are SIMON RENARD, JOHN BRIDGES, BARON CHANDOS, ROBERT CLINTON, ANTHONY BROWN, VISCOUNT OF MONTAGU.

LORD CHANDOS.

You are right, my lord, this damned Italian must have bewitched the Queen. She can't exist without him ; she lives only for him, finds pleasure only in him, listens only to him. If a day passes without seeing him, her eyes droop as they did when she loved Cardinal Polus, you remember ?

SIMON RENARD.

She is very much in love, it is true, and, consequently, very jealous.

LORD CHANDOS.

The Italian has bewitched her.

LORD MONTAGU.

For a fact, they say that people of his nationality have philters for that purpose.

LORD CLINTON.

The Spanish are clever at poisons which kill people, the Italians are clever at poisons which make people fall in love.

LORD CHANDOS.

Then Fabiani is Spanish and Italian, at the same time. The Queen is in love and is ill. He has made her drink both.

LORD MONTAGU.

As to that, is he really Spanish or Italian?

LORD CHANDOS.

It appears certain that he was born in Italy, in the Capitanate, and that he was brought up in Spain. He claims to be connected with a great Spanish family. Lord Clinton has the story at his finger-tips.

LORD CLINTON.

An adventurer, — neither Spanish nor Italian, and still less English, thank God! These men without a country have no pity on a country, when they become powerful.

LORD MONTAGU.

Didn't you say the Queen was ill, Chandos? That does not hinder her from leading a very gay life with her favourite!

LORD CLINTON.

A gay life! A gay life! The people weep while the Queen laughs and the favourite is gorged. This man eats silver and drinks gold! The Queen has given him the estates of Lord Talbot, the great Lord Talbot! The Queen has made him Earl of Clanbrassil and Baron of Dinasmonddy, this Fabiano Fabiani who says he belongs to the Spanish family of Peñalver, and who lies when he says it. He is an English peer like you, Montagu, like you, Chandos, like Stanley, like Norfolk, like myself, like the King! He has the garter, the same as the Infante of Portugal, as the King of Denmark, as Thomas Percy, seventh Earl of Northumberland. And what a tyrant is this tyrant who rules us from his bed! Never did such a curse rest upon England! And yet I have seen much, — I, who am old! There are seventy new gallows at Tyburn; the stakes are always embers and never ashes; the executioner's axe is sharp every morning and blunted every night. Every day some great nobleman is slaughtered; the day before yesterday it was Blantyre, yesterday Northcurry, to-day South-Reppo, to-morrow Tyrconnel. Next week it will be you, Chandos, and next month it will be I. My lords, my lords, it is shameful and outrageous that all these honest English heads should fall to please a miserable adventurer who does not even belong to our country! It is a frightful and unbearable thing, to think that a Neapolitan favourite can drag as many blocks as he likes from under this Queen's bed. These two lead a gay life, you say? By Heaven, it is infamous! Ah, they lead a gay life, these lovers, while the headsman, at their door, makes widows and orphans! Oh, their Italian guitar is too well accompanied by the clank of chains! Madame Queen! you send to the chapel of Avignon for your singers; every day in your palace, you have comedies, plays, and a stage crowded with

musicians! Upon my life, madame, less joy at your house and less mourning at ours, if you please; fewer dancers there, and fewer executioners here; fewer farces at Westminster, and fewer scaffolds at Tyburn!

LORD MONTAGU.

Have a care, my Lord Clinton! We are loyal subjects! Not a word against the Queen, everything against Fabiani.

SIMON RENARD (*laying his hand on* LORD CLINTON'S *shoulder*).

Have patience!

LORD CLINTON.

Patience! That is easy enough for you to say, Mr. Simon Renard! You are bailiff of Amont in Franche-Comté, subject of the Emperor, and his ambassador at London. You represent the Prince of Spain, the Queen's future husband. Your person is sacred to the favourite. But it is different with us. You see, for you, Fabiani is the lover; for us he is the butcher! [*It is night.*

SIMON RENARD.

This man troubles me as much as you! You tremble only for your life. I tremble for my power. That means much more. I do not talk; I act. I feel less anger than you, perhaps, but I feel more hate. I will destroy the favourite.

LORD MONTAGU.

Yes! but how to do it! I think of it all day.

SIMON RENARD.

It is not in the daytime that the favourites of queens are made and unmade; it is at night.

LORD CHANDOS.

This night is dark and frightful.

SIMON RENARD.

I find it good for what I wish to do.

LORD CHANDOS.

What do you mean to do?

SIMON RENARD.

You shall see. My Lord Chandos, when a woman reigns, caprice reigns. Politics are no longer a matter of calculation then, but of chance. You can count upon nothing. To-day does not logically bring to-morrow. Public affairs are no longer like a game of chess, but a game of cards.

LORD CLINTON.

That is all very well; but let us come to the point. When will you deliver us from the favourite? Time is pressing. To-morrow Tyrconnel will be beheaded.

SIMON RENARD.

If I find the man I am looking for, to-night, Tyrconnel will sup with you to-morrow.

LORD CLINTON.

What do you mean? What will have become of Fabiani?

SIMON RENARD.

Have you good eyes, my lord?

LORD CLINTON.

Yes, although I am old and the night is dark.

SIMON RENARD.

Do you see London on the other side of the water?

LORD CLINTON.

Yes. Why?

SIMON RENARD.

Look well! From here you can see the height and the depth of every favourite's fortune, — Westminster and the Tower of London.

LORD CLINTON.

Well?

SIMON RENARD.

If God is with me, there is a man who at this moment is yet there [*pointing to Westminster*], and who to-morrow, at the same time, will be here [*pointing to the Tower*].

LORD CLINTON.

Pray God be with you!

LORD MONTAGU.

The people hate him no less than we do. What a festival will his fall make in London!

LORD CHANDOS.

We have placed ourselves in your hands, Sir Bailiff. Dispose of us. What must we do?

SIMOND RENARD (*indicating a house near to the water*).

You all see that house. It is the house of Gilbert the engraver. Do not lose sight of it. Now go away with your people, but don't go too far. Above all, do nothing without me.

LORD CHANDOS.

It is agreed. [*They all exit at different sides.*

SIMON RENARD (*alone*).

The man I need is not easy to find.

[*He exits.* JANE *and* GILBERT *enter, arm in arm; they go towards the house.* JOSHUA FARNABY, *enveloped in a long cloak accompanies them.*

SCENE II.

JANE, GILBERT, JOSHUA FARNABY.

JOSHUA.

I must leave you here, my good friends. It is midnight, and I must go back to my post of turnkey of the Tower of London. I am not as free as you are, you see! A turnkey is only another kind of prisoner! Good-bye, Jane! Good-bye, Gilbert. Ah, my friends, how glad I am to see you happy! When is the wedding, Gilbert?

GILBERT.

In one week, is n't it, Jane?

JOSHUA.

Faith! day after to-morrow is Christmas. This is the day of good wishes and presents. But I have nothing to wish you. It would be impossible to wish more beauty to the bride or more love to the bride-groom. You are fortunate.

GILBERT.

Good Joshua! And you, are you not happy?

JOSHUA.

Neither happy nor unhappy, As for me, I have given up everything. Look you, Gilbert [*opening his cloak and disclosing a bunch of keys hanging to his belt*], prison keys always jingling at your side, talk to you, suggest all sorts of philosophical ideas to you. When I was young, I was like the rest, — in love for a day, ambitious for a month, mad a whole year. It was during the reign of Henry VIII. that I was young. Strange man that Henry

VIII! A man who changed his wives as a woman changes her dresses. He repudiated the first, had the second beheaded, had the third's womb cut open; as for the fourth, he had mercy on her, — he sent her off; but for revenge he had the fifth's head cut off! This is n't the story of Bluebeard I am telling you, my beautiful Jane; it is the history of Henry VIII. In those days I interested myself in the religious wars; I fought first for one side and then for the other. That was the wisest thing to do. The whole business was very ticklish. It was whether to be for or against the Pope. The King's officers hung those who were for, but they burned those who were against. The neutral people, — those who neither were for nor against, — they hung them or they burned them indiscriminately. We managed as we could. Yes, the rope; no, the fagot. I, who am speaking to you, I smelled of burning very often, and I am not sure that I was not un-hung two or three times. Those were great times; very much like the times now. The devil take me if I know now whom I fought for or what I fought about. If people speak to me now about Master Luther and Pope Paul III., I shrug my shoulders. You see, Gilbert, when a man has grey hairs, he should n't go back to the opinions he fought for nor the women he loved when he was twenty. The women and the opinions will seem very ugly, very old, very paltry, very silly, very much wrinkled and out of date. Such is my history. Now I am through with public affairs. I am no longer the King's soldier nor the Pope's soldier; I am jailer of the Tower of London. I don't fight any more for anybody, and I put everybody under lock and key. I am turnkey and I am old. I have one foot in a prison and the other in the grave. I am the one who picks up the remnants of all the ministers and favourites who go to pieces in the Queen's palace. It is very

amusing. I have also a little child whom I love, and you both whom I love too; and if you are happy, I am happy also.

GILBERT.

If that is the case, you can be happy; can't he, Jane?

JOSHUA.

I can't do anything to add to your happiness, but Jane can do everything. You love her. I may never be able to do anything for you. Fortunately for you, you are not high and mighty enough to ever need the help of the turnkey of the Tower of London. Jane will pay my debt at the same time that she pays her own, because she and I owe everything to you. Jane was but a poor child, a forsaken orphan; you took her home and brought her up. I was drowning in the Thames, one fine day, and you dragged me out of the water.

GILBERT.

Why do you always talk about that, Joshua?

JOSHUA.

In order to tell you that our duty, Jane's and mine, is to love you. I, as a brother; and she, not as a sister.

JANE.

No, as a woman. I understand you, Joshua.

[*She sinks back into her reverie.*

GILBERT.

Look at her, Joshua! Is she not beautiful and attractive, and is she not worthy of a king? If you only knew! You cannot imagine how I love her!

JOSHUA.

Be careful! It is dangerous. A woman should not be loved so much as that. With a child, it is different.

GILBERT.

What do you mean?

JOSHUA.

Nothing. I will be at your wedding next week. I hope State affairs will leave me a little liberty then, and that everything will be finished.

GILBERT.

How? What will be finished?

JOSHUA.

Ah, these things do not interest you, Gilbert. You are in love; you belong to the people. What do the intrigues of the high-born matter to you, who are happy among the low-born? But since you ask me, I will tell you that within one week, perhaps within twenty-four hours, it is hoped that Fabiano Fabiani's place near the Queen will be filled by another.

GILBERT.

Who is Fabiano Fabiani?

JOSHUA.

The Queen's lover: a very celebrated and a very fascinating favourite, — a favourite who has had his enemies' heads chopped off with greater despatch than a procuress can repeat an "Ave;" the best favourite that the executioner of the Tower of London has had for ten years. For you must know that every great lord's head that falls, brings in ten silver crowns to the executioner, — sometimes twice as much, when the head is very distin-

guished. The fall of this Fabiani is greatly desired; though, I must say, during my duties at the Tower, it is only the bad-tempered people whom I hear find fault with him, — the discontented people; those whose heads are to fall next month.

GILBERT.

Let the wolves rend each other! What do we care about the Queen and the Queen's favourite? Is n't it so, Jane?

JOSHUA.

There is a big conspiracy against Fabiani; if he escapes, he will be lucky. I should not be surprised if they were to strike some blow to-night. I just saw Master Simon Renard prowling about here, very much absorbed.

GILBERT.

Who is Master Simon Renard?

JOSHUA.

Is it possible that you don't know? He is the Emperor's right hand at London. The Queen is to marry the Prince of Spain, and Simon Renard is his ambassador to her. The Queen hates him, this Simon Renard; but she is afraid of him, and she can't do anything to him. He has already destroyed two or three favourites. It seems to be his instinct to destroy favourites. He clears up the palace from time to time. He is a shrewd and spiteful man; he knows all that goes on, and he digs two or three subterranean rows of intrigues under every event. As for Lord Paget, — did n't you ask me who was Lord Paget? — he is a crafty nobleman who helped to manage affairs under Henry VIII. He is a member of the secret council. He has such an ascendency that the other ministers do not dare to breathe in

his presence, — except, however, the chancellor, my lord Gardiner, who detests him. A violent man, this Gardiner, and well born. As for Paget, he was nobody, — a cobbler's son. He is to be made Baron Paget of Beaudesert in Stafford.

GILBERT.

How glibly he tells all these things, this Joshua.

JOSHUA.

My faith! It's from hearing the prisoners of State talk. [SIMON RENARD *appears at the back of stage.* You see, Gilbert, the man who knows most about the history of these times is the turnkey of the Tower of London.

SIMON RENARD (*who overhears these last words*).

You are mistaken, my master; it is the executioner!

JOSHUA (*low to* GILBERT *and* JANE).

Let us move back a little!

[SIMON RENARD *goes off slowly; when he has disappeared.* That is Master Simon Renard himself.

GILBERT.

I don't like to have all these men prowling about my house.

JOSHUA.

What the devil is he doing here? I must hurry back; I think he is getting work ready for me. Good-bye, Gilbert! Good-bye, my beautiful Jane, I knew you when you were no bigger than that, all the same!

GILBERT.

Good-bye, Joshua! What are you hiding there under your cloak?

JOSHUA.

I've got my conspiracy, too!

GILBERT.

What conspiracy?

JOSHUA.

O lover who forgets everything else! I have just reminded you that the day after to-morrow is the time for Christmas presents. The nobles are plotting a surprise for Fabiani. Well, I am plotting a surprise too. The Queen may give herself the present of a bran-new favourite. I am going to give my child a doll. [*He takes a doll from his cloak.*] Bran new, too! We will see which will be the first to break her toy. God keep you, my friends.

GILBERT.

Good-bye, Joshua!

[JOSHUA *departs.* GILBERT *takes* JANE'S *hand and kisses it with passion.*

JOSHUA (*from back of stage*).

How wise is Providence! She gives to each one his plaything. The doll to the child, the child to the man, the man to the woman, and the woman to the devil.

[*Exits.*

SCENE III.

GILBERT, JANE.

GILBERT.

I must go, too. Good-bye, Jane: sleep well.

JANE.

You are not coming in with me to-night, Gilbert?

GILBERT.

I can't. You know, I told you before, Jane, I have some work to do in my shop to-night. I must engrave the handle of a dagger for some Lord Clanbrassil, whom I have never seen, and who wants it to-morrow morning.

JANE.

Then good-night, Gilbert. Until to-morrow!

GILBERT.

No, Jane, wait a moment. Heaven! how it hurts me to leave you, even for a few hours. How true it is that you are my life and my joy. Yet I have to work, — we are so poor. I won't go in, because I should stay; and yet I can't leave you, weak man that I am. Let us sit down by the door a few moments, on this bench. I think it will be easier to go from here than if I went into the house, and, above all, into your room. Give me your hand.

[*He sits and takes her hands in his; she stands.*

Jane, do you love me?

JANE.

Oh, I owe you everything, Gilbert. I know it, although you have concealed it from me a long time! When I was little, almost in my cradle, my parents abandoned me, and you took me. For sixteen years your hand has worked for me as if you were a father; your eyes have watched over me like a mother. What would I be without you, just Heaven! All I have, you have given me; all I am, you have made me.

GILBERT.

Jane, do you love me?

JANE.

What devotion yours has been, Gilbert! You work for me, night and day; you wear your eyes out, you kill yourself for me. You are going to sit up all night again to-night. And never a reproach to me, never an unkindness, never an angry word! You are very poor, yet you remember all my small womanly vanities; you gratify them. Gilbert, whenever I think about you, my eyes fill with tears. You have often gone without bread; I have never gone without my ribbons.

GILBERT.

Jane, do you love me?

JANE.

Gilbert, I would like to kneel down and kiss your feet.

GILBERT.

Do you love me, do you love me? All that does not prove that you love me. I want that word, Jane! Gratitude, always gratitude! Oh, I stamp it under-foot, your gratitude. I want love or nothing! Die! Jane, you have been my daughter for sixteen years; now you are to be my wife. I adopted you; now I am to marry you — in one week. You know, you promised me; you have consented; you are my betrothed. You loved me when you promised that. Oh, Jane, there was a time — do you remember it? — when you told me, "I love you," and you lifted your sweet eyes to heaven. That is the way I want you to be. For some months now, you have seemed different, especially during these last three weeks that my work has kept me away from here nights. Jane, I must have you love me! I am used to it. You were always so light-hearted; now you are sad and absent-minded, — not cold, my poor child (you try your

best not to be), but I feel your loving words do not come as tenderly and as naturally as they used. What is the matter? Don't you love me any more? I know I am an honest man, I know I am a good workman; but I would rather be a robber and an assassin, and be loved by you. Jane, if you knew how much I love you!

JANE.

I know it, Gilbert, and it makes me weep.

GILBERT.

For joy, is n't it? Say it is for joy! Oh, I need to believe it. There is only that in the world, — to be loved. I have only a poor working-man's heart, but my Jane must love me. Why do you always talk to me about what I have done for you? One single word of love from you puts all the gratitude on my side. I will damn myself and commit a crime, whenever you wish it. You will be my wife, won't you, and you love me? Oh, Jane, for one look of your eyes I would give my work and my labour; for one smile, my life; for one kiss, my soul.

JANE.

What a noble heart you have, Gilbert.

GILBERT.

Listen to me, Jane, — laugh at me if you will; I am mad, I am jealous! I will tell you why. Do not get angry! It seems to me, for some time I have seen several young lords prowling around here. Do you know, Jane, I am thirty-two years old. For a poor, clumsy, badly-dressed workman like myself, who am no longer young, who am not handsome, what a misery it is to love a charming, beautiful girl of seventeen, who

attracts all the handsome, gold-bedizened young nobles around her, as a light attracts the butterflies. Oh, I suffer; indeed, I do! But I never blame you, even in my thoughts! You, so honest, so pure; you, whose brow has never been touched, except by my lips. I only feel, sometimes, that you look on the Queen's cavalcades and retinues with too much pleasure, that you enjoy too much the fine suits of velvet and satin, under which there are no hearts, no souls. Forgive me. My God! why do so many young noblemen come around here? Why am I not handsome, young, noble, rich? Gilbert the engraver, — that is all I am! They are Lord Chandos, Lord Gerard Fitz-Gerard, Earl of Arundel, the Duke of Norfolk! Oh, how I hate them! I spend my life engraving the handles of their swords, which I would like to plunge into their bowels.

JANE.

Gilbert!

GILBERT.

I beg your pardon, Jane! Love makes us very wicked, does n't it?

JANE.

No, very good; for you are good, Gilbert.

GILBERT.

Oh, how much I love you! It increases every day. I would like to die for you! Love me or not, you can do as you please. I am mad. Forgive all that I have said. It is late: I must leave you! Good-bye! Oh, how I hate to leave you! Go in! Have n't you your key?

JANE.

No; I have n't had it for several days.

GILBERT.

Take mine. Until to-morrow morning! Jane, don't forget this! To-day I am still your father: in one week I shall be your husband.

[*He kisses her on the forehead and exits.*

JANE (*alone*).

My husband! Oh, no! I will never commit that crime. Poor Gilbert! he loves me truly; and the other — ah, provided I have not preferred vanity to love! Unhappy woman that I am, into whose power have I fallen! Oh, I am most thankless and most guilty! I hear footsteps! Let me get in quickly.

[*Goes into house.*

SCENE IV.

GILBERT, A MAN *enveloped in cloak and wearing a yellow cap.* THE MAN *holds* GILBERT *by the hand.*

GILBERT.

Yes, I recognize you; you are the Jewish beggar who has been prowling around this house for several days. What do you want with me? Why have you taken hold of my hand, and why have you brought me back here?

THE MAN.

Because what I have to say to you, I can only say here.

GILBERT.

Well, what is it? Speak! Hurry!

THE MAN.

Listen, young man. One night, sixteen years ago, Lord Talbot, Earl of Waterford, was beheaded by torch-light, for the crimes of popery and rebellion, while his followers were cut to pieces in the city of London by Henry VIII.'s soldiers. They shot in the streets all night. That night a very young workman, who was much more interested in his labour than in the battle, was working in his stall. It was the first stall from the entrance of London Bridge; a low door on the right, the remains of some old red paint on the wall. It might have been two o'clock in the morning. They were fighting all around there. The balls hissed across the Thames. Suddenly some one knocked at the door of the stall, through which the workman's lamp threw a glimmer. The workman opened it. A man he did not know, entered. This man carried in his arms a baby in long clothes, who was much frightened and was crying. The man put the child down on the table and said, "Here is a creature who has neither father nor mother." Then he went out slowly and closed the door after him. Gilbert, the workman, had neither father nor mother himself. The workman accepted the child: the orphan adopted the orphan. He took it, watched over it, clothed it, fed it, tended it, brought it up, loved it. He gave himself entirely to this poor little creature whom civil war had thrown into his stall. He forgot everything for her, — his youth, his love-affairs, his pleasures; he made this child the sole object of his work, his affections, his life: and it has lasted sixteen years. Gilbert, the workman was you; the child —

GILBERT.

Was Jane. All that you say is true; but what are you driving at?

THE MAN.

I forgot to say that on the child's swaddling-clothes a paper was pinned, on which was written: "Have pity upon Jane."

GILBERT.

It was written in blood. I have kept that paper. I always carry it about me. But you torture me. What is your purpose, tell me.

THE MAN.

This. You see that I am acquainted with your affairs. Gilbert, watch over your house to-night.

GILBERT.

What do you mean?

THE MAN.

Not another word. Don't go to your work; stay around the house: watch! I am neither your friend nor your enemy; this is only a piece of advice that I give you. Now, for your own sake, leave me! Go down that side, and come back if you hear me call for help.

GILBERT.

What does this mean? [*Goes off slowly.*

SCENE V.

THE MAN (*alone*).

The matter is well arranged now. I needed some one young and strong to help me if it was necessary. This Gilbert is just the man I want. I think I hear the sound of oars and a guitar on the water. Yes.

[*He goes to the parapet. A guitar and distant singing are heard.*

When you sing soft at night, love,
Clasped in my arms so fond,
Can you not hear the tender thoughts
Which to your voice respond?
Your song brings back unto my heart
The happy days of yore;
Then sing, my beauty, sing, my love,
Sing on for evermore!

THE MAN.

That is my man!

[*The voice draws nearer with each verse.*

When you laugh, on your lips, dear,
Love's sweetest shadows play;
And doubt and cruel unbelief
Are sudden chased away.
For laughter proves we 're loyal
And faithful to the core;
Then laugh, my beauty, laugh, my love,
Laugh on for evermore!

When you sleep, calm and pure, love,
In shadow, 'neath my eyes,
And your soft breathing gives my heart
Its tenderest replies,
On your sweet form my eyes can feast,
Oh, beauty's priceless store!
Then sleep, my beauty, sleep, my love,
Sleep on for evermore!

And when you say, "I love you,"
In truth it seems to be
As if God's heaven were opening
Especially for me.
I see dreams hidden in your eyes
That we 've not dreamed before;
Then love me, oh, my beauty,
Love me for evermore!

You see, the whole of life, dear,
Lies in those words, just four, —

All things that people envy,
All things that men adore,
All things that are seductive,
On which our heart sets store.
To sing, to laugh, my beauty,
To sleep, to love, no more!

THE MAN.

He lands. Good! He sends off the boatman. Excellent!

[*Comes back to the front of the stage.*

Here he comes.

[FABIANO FABIANI *enters, enveloped in a cloak; he goes towards the door of the house.*

SCENE VI.

THE MAN, FABIANO FABIANI.

THE MAN (*stopping* FABIANI).

A word with you, if you please.

FABIANI.

I believe some one is speaking to me. Who is this knave? Who are you?

THE MAN.

Whatever you wish me to be.

FABIANI.

This lantern is not very bright, but you wear a yellow cap, it seems to me, — a Jew's cap. Are you a Jew?

THE MAN.

Yes, a Jew. I have something to tell you.

FABIANI.

What is your name?

THE MAN.

I know your name, and you don't know mine. I have the advantage. Permit me to keep it.

FABIANI.

You know my name? That is n't true.

THE MAN.

I know your name. At Naples you were called Signor Fabiani; at Madrid, Don Fabiano; at London you are called Lord Fabiano Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil.

FABIANI.

The devil take you!

THE MAN.

God keep you!

FABIANI.

I will have you cudgelled. I do not wish my name to be known when I go abroad by night.

THE MAN.

Especially when you go where you are going.

FABIANI.

What do you mean?

THE MAN.

If the Queen knew!

FABIANI.

I am going nowhere in particular.

THE MAN.

Oh, yes, my lord! You are going to see the fair Jane, the betrothed of Gilbert the engraver.

FABIANI (*aside*).

The devil! This is a dangerous man.

THE MAN.

Shall I tell you more? You have seduced this girl, and during the last month she has received you twice in her house at night. This is the third time. The beauty is waiting for you.

FABIANI.

Keep still. Do you want hush-money? How much do you want?

THE MAN.

We will see about that by-and-by. Now, my lord, shall I tell you why you have seduced this girl?

FABIANI.

By my faith! because I was in love with her.

THE MAN.

No. You were not in love with her.

FABIANI.

I was n't in love with Jane?

THE MAN.

No more than with the Queen! Love, oh, no! calculation, yes.

FABIANI.

Why, fool, you are no man at all! You are my conscience dressed up like a Jew.

THE MAN.

I will speak to you as if I were your conscience. This is your plan. You are the Queen's favourite. The Queen has given you the garter, an earldom, and a lordship, — empty things, all of them. The garter is a rag; the earldom is a word; the lordship is the right to have your head cut off. You wanted something more. You wanted fine lands, fine bailiwicks, fine castles, fine revenues in fine English pounds. Well, King Henry VIII. confiscated the estates of Lord Talbot, who was beheaded sixteen years ago. You got Queen Mary to give you Lord Talbot's estates. But, to make the gift valid, it is necessary that Lord Talbot should have died without heirs. And since Lord Talbot died for Queen Mary and for her mother, Catherine of Aragon, since Lord Talbot was a Papist, and since the Queen is a Papist, it is not at all doubtful, if there existed such an heir or an heiress, that Queen Mary would take back the estates from you, great favourite though you are, and out of duty, gratitude and religion, return them to the heir or heiress. You were quite easy on that score, for Lord Talbot had never had but one little daughter; she disappeared from her cradle at the time of her father's execution, and all England believed her to be dead. But your spies have lately discovered that during the night in which Lord Talbot and his partisans were exterminated by Henry VIII., a child was mysteriously brought to an engraver on London Bridge, and that it was probable that this child, reared under the name of Jane, was Jane Talbot, the little girl who had disappeared. It is true that the written proofs of her birth were lacking, but they might be found any day. The discovery was unpleasant. It would be hard to see one's self forced some day to give back Shrewsbury, Wexford, which is a fine city, and the magnificent earldom of Waterford, to a little girl! What was to be done?

You searched for a way to set aside this young girl, and to destroy her. An honest man would have had her killed or poisoned. You, my lord, have done better, — you have dishonoured her.

FABIANI.

Insolent fool!

THE MAN.

It is your conscience which is speaking, my lord. Another man would have taken this young girl's life; you have taken her honour, and, consequently, her future. Queen Mary is a prude, although she has lovers herself.

FABIANI.

This man goes to the bottom of everything.

THE MAN.

The Queen's health is bad; the Queen may die, and then you, the favourite, will fall shattered on her tomb. The actual proofs of this young girl's rank may be found; and then, if the Queen is dead, Jane Talbot, dishonoured though she be, will be recognized as Lord Talbot's heiress. You have foreseen that too. You are a handsome young cavalier; you have won her love; she has given herself to you; at the worst, you can marry her. Don't deprecate your scheme, my lord; I consider it sublime. If I were not myself, I would like to be you.

FABIANI.

Thank you.

THE MAN.

You have managed the matter very skilfully. You have concealed your name. You are safe as far as the Queen is concerned. The poor girl thinks she has been seduced by a nobleman from Somerset county, named Amyas Pawlet.

FABIANI.

All, — he knows it all! Well, come to the point. What do you want of me?

THE MAN.

My lord, suppose some one had in his possession the papers which prove the birth, existence, and rights of Talbot's heiress! It would make you as poor as my ancestor Job, Don Fabiano, and would leave you no better castles than your castles in Spain, which would be very hard for you.

FABIANI.

Yes! But no one has those papers.

THE MAN.

Yes. Some one has them.

FABIANI.

Who?

THE MAN.

I.

FABIANI.

You, miserable wretch! It is n't true! Jew speaks, Jew lies.

THE MAN.

I have got the papers.

FABIANI.

You lie! Where have you got them?

THE MAN.

In my pocket.

FABIANI.

I don't believe you. Are they all in order? Nothing lacking?

THE MAN.

Nothing is lacking.

FABIANI.

Then I must have them.

THE MAN.

Gently.

FABIANI.

Jew, give me those papers!

THE MAN.

Excellent! Jew, miserable beggar who crawls through the streets, give me the city of Shrewsbury, give me the city of Wexford, give me the earldom of Waterford! Charity, if you please!

FABIANI.

Those papers are everything to me and nothing to you.

THE MAN.

Simon Renard and Lord Chandos would pay me pretty high for them.

FABIANI.

Simon Renard and Lord Chandos are two dogs between whom I will have you hung.

THE MAN.

You have nothing else to say to me? Then farewell.

FABIANI.

Come back! What do you want me to give you for those papers?

THE MAN.

Something which you have with you.

FABIANI.

My purse?

THE MAN.

Out upon you! Do you want mine?

FABIANI.

What then?

THE MAN.

There is a parchment which never leaves you. It is a signature in blank which the Queen gave you, and in which she swears, upon her Catholic crown, to grant any favour he may ask, to the one who presents it. Give me that signature in blank, and you shall have Jane Talbot's titles. Paper for paper.

FABIANI.

What do you want to do with this signature in blank?

THE MAN.

I will explain. Cards on the table, my lord. I have told you your affairs; now I will tell you mine. I am one of the principal money-dealers in Kantersten Street, Brussels. I lend money; it is my business. I lend ten and get back fifteen. I lend to every one: I would lend to the devil; I would lend to the Pope. Two months ago one of my creditors died, without paying me. It was an old exiled servant of the Talbot family. The poor man left nothing but a few rags: I seized them. Among these rags I found a box, and in the box some papers,—Jane Talbot's papers, my lord, giving her entire history in detail and furnishing proofs for better times. The Queen of England had just given you Jane Talbot's estates. I was in great need of the Queen of England at that time, for I wanted to make a loan of ten thousand gold marcs. I realized that I might do business with you. I came to England in this disguise; I made myself a spy upon you, upon Jane Talbot. I did it all myself. In this way I

learned everything, and here I am. You shall have Jane Talbot's papers if you give me the Queen's signature in blank. I will write upon it that the Queen shall give me ten thousand gold marcs. They owe me something at the excise-office, but I won't haggle. Ten thousand gold marcs, — nothing more. I don't ask you for the sum, because only a crowned head could pay it. I am speaking frankly, you see. Two men as clever as we are, my lord, have nothing to gain by deceiving each other. If frankness were banished from the earth, it would be rediscovered in a *tête-à-tête* between two rogues.

FABIANI.

Impossible! I can't give you this signature in blank. Ten thousand gold marcs! What would the Queen say? And then, to-morrow I may be disgraced: this signature in blank is my safeguard. This signature in blank is my head.

THE MAN.

What does that matter to me?

FABIANI.

Ask me for something else.

THE MAN.

I want that.

FABIANI.

Jew, give me Jane Talbot's papers.

THE MAN.

My lord, give me the Queen's signature in blank.

FABIANI.

Accursed Jew, I will have to yield.

[*Draws a paper from his pocket.*

THE MAN.

Show me the Queen's signature in blank.

FABIANI.

Show me Talbot's papers.

THE MAN.

Afterwards.

[*They go close to the lantern.* FABIANI *stands behind the Jew, and with his left hand holds the paper under the Jews eyes; he examines it.* THE MAN *reads.*

"We, Mary, Queen —" It is well. You see, my lord, I am like you. I have calculated upon everything. I have foreseen everything.

FABIANI (*draws a dagger with his right hand and plunges it into the Jew's throat*).

Except this!

THE MAN.

Oh, traitor! Help!

[*He falls. In falling he throws a sealed packet into the darkness behind him;* FABIANI *does not perceive it.*

FABIANI (*leaning over the body*).

Faith! I believe he is dead. Quick, the papers. [*He searches the Jew.*] What! he has n't got them. He has nothing, — nothing at all about him! Not a paper! He was lying, the old wretch! He deceived me: he wanted to rob me. Is it possible, you accursed Jew! No, he has nothing. That is clear. I have killed him for nothing. They are all alike, these Jews. To lie and steal, that is all they can do. Come, let us get rid of this corpse, I can't leave it here at the door. [*Goes up stage.*]

I will see if the boatman is still there; he can help me throw it into the Thames.

[*He descends, and disappears behind the parapet.*

GILBERT (*enters from the opposite side*).

I thought I heard a cry!

[*He perceives the body stretched upon the ground under the lantern.*

Some one has been assassinated! The beggar!

THE MAN (*lifting himself half-way up*).

Ah, you come too late, Gilbert.

[*He points to the place where he threw the packet.*

Take them. They are the papers which prove that Jane, your betrothed, is daughter and heiress of the last Lord Talbot. My assassin is Lord Clanbrassil, the Queen's favourite. Oh, I suffocate! Gilbert, avenge me! Avenge yourself! [*He dies.*

GILBERT.

Dead! Avenge myself? What does he mean? Jane, daughter to Lord Talbot? Lord Clanbrassil! The Queen's favourite? Oh, I am lost in wonder! [*Shaking the body.*] Speak! One word more! He is indeed dead.

SCENE VII.

GILBERT, FABIANI.

FABIANI (*returning*).

Who goes there?

GILBERT.

A man has been assassinated.

FABIANI.

No, a Jew.

GILBERT.

Who killed him?

FABIANI.

Faith! You or I.

GILBERT.

Sir?

FABIANI.

No witnesses. A corpse on the ground. Two men beside it. Which is the assassin? There is nothing to prove it is one rather than the other, — I rather than you.

GILBERT.

Miserable man! You are the assassin!

FABIANI.

Well, yes! To be frank, I am. What of it?

GILBERT.

I am going to call the constables.

FABIANI.

You are going to help me throw the body into the water.

GILBERT.

I will have you seized and punished.

FABIANI.

You will help me throw the body into the water.

GILBERT.

You are insolent.

FABIANI.

Do as I say! Let us destroy all traces of this. Believe me, you are more interested in the matter than I am.

GILBERT.

Upon my soul!

FABIANI.

One of us two did the deed. I am a great lord, a nobleman. You are a passer-by, a peasant, a man of the people. A noble who kills a Jew pays a fine of four sous; a man of the people who kills one of his fellow-creatures is hung.

GILBERT.

You would dare —

FABIANI.

If you denounce me, I will denounce you. I will be believed sooner than you. At any rate, the chances are unequal. Four sous fine for me, and the gallows for you.

GILBERT.

No witnesses! No proofs! Oh, my brain is bewildered! This miserable man is right, he has me in his power.

FABIANI.

Shall I help you throw the corpse into the river?

GILBERT.

You are a demon!

[GILBERT *takes the body up by the head,* FABIANI *by the feet; they carry it to the parapet.*

FABIANI.

Yes. Faith, my friend, I can no longer exactly tell which of us killed this man!

[*They go down behind the parapet.* FABIANI *re-appears.*

It is done. Good-night, comrade! Go your way!

[*He starts toward the house, but turns back, seeing that* GILBERT *follows him.*

Well, what do you want? Money for your trouble? In truth, I don't owe you anything, but here, take this.

[*He gives his purse to* GILBERT, *whose first impulse is to refuse it, but who accepts it afterwards with the air of a man who has reflected.*

Well, go! What more are you waiting for?

GILBERT.

Nothing.

FABIANI.

Then stay, if it pleases you. You can have the fine starlight while I have the pretty girl. God be with you!

[*He starts towards the door of the house and is about to open it.*

GILBERT.

Where are you going?

FABIANI.

Faith, into my house!

GILBERT.

How? Into your house!

FABIANI.

That is what I said.

GILBERT.

Which of us two is dreaming? A short time ago you told me that I was the Jew's assassin! Now you tell me that that house is yours.

FABIANI.

Or that of my mistress, which amounts to the same thing.

GILBERT.

Repeat what you have just said.

FABIANI.

My friend, I say, since you wish to know, that this house belongs to a beautiful girl named Jane, who is my mistress.

GILBERT.

And I tell you, my lord, that you lie! I tell you that you are a liar and an assassin! I tell you that you are an insolent knave! I tell you, you have pronounced some fatal words which will kill us both, — you, for having said them: me, for having heard them.

FABIANI.

Dear me! Who the devil is this man?

GILBERT.

I am Gilbert the engraver. Jane is my betrothed.

FABIANI.

And I am the Chevalier Amyas Pawlet. Jane is my mistress.

GILBERT.

You lie, I tell you! You are Lord Clanbrassil, the Queen's favourite. Don't you think I know that, fool!

FABIANI (*aside*).

Everybody seems to know me to-night. Another dangerous man, whom we must get rid of.

GILBERT.

Tell me instantly that you have lied like a coward, and that Jane is not your mistress!

FABIANI.

Do you know her writing!

[*He takes a note from his pocket.*

Read this!

[*Aside, while* GILBERT *tremblingly unfolds the paper.*

If he would go in and quarrel with Jane, it would give my people time to get here.

GILBERT (*reading*).

"I will be alone to-night. You can come." Malediction! My lord, you have dishonoured my betrothed, you are an infamous wretch! I demand my revenge.

FABIANI (*putting his hand to his sword*).

Willingly! Where is your sword?

GILBERT.

Oh, fury! To be one of the people! To have nothing, — neither sword nor dagger. Well, you can go; but I will wait for you at night, in a corner of the street, and I will stick my nails into your throat, and I will assassinate you, you villain.

FABIANI.

Dear me! How violent you are, my friend.

GILBERT.

I will be revenged upon you, my lord!

FABIANI.

You! Revenged upon me? You so low, upon me so high! You are crazy! I defy you.

GILBERT.

You defy me?

FABIANI.

Yes.

GILBERT.

You shall see.

FABIANI (*aside*).

To-morrow's sun must not rise for this man. [*Aloud.*] Friend, listen to me. Go into your house. I am sorry you found it out, but I leave the beauty to you. Go in.

[*He throws a key down at* GILBERT'S *feet.*

There is a key, if you have n't got one. Or, if you like it better, you can knock against the shutter three times and Jane will think it is I, and let you in. Good-night.

[*He goes off.*

SCENE VIII.

GILBERT (*alone*).

He is gone. He is no longer here. I did not grind and crush him beneath my feet. I had to let him go. Not a weapon about me.

[*He sees on the ground the dagger with which* LORD CLANBRASSIL *killed the Jew; he picks it up with fearful haste.*

Ah, you come too late; you can probably kill no one but myself. All the same, whether you fall from Heaven or are vomited up from hell, I bless you. My Jane has betrayed me! Jane has given herself to this infamous man. Jane is the heiress of Lord Talbot. Jane is lost to me! Oh, God! more terrible things have come to me in this hour than my brain can stand.

[SIMON RENARD *appears in the darkness at the back.*

Oh, to be revenged on that man! To be revenged on this Lord Clanbrassil! If I go to the Queen's palace, the lackeys will kick me out as if I were a dog. I am mad! My head will burst! I am willing to die, but I want to be revenged. I would give my blood for revenge! Will nobody in the world make this bargain with me? Who will give me vengeance on Lord Clanbrassil and take my life in payment?

SCENE IX.

GILBERT, SIMON RENARD.

SIMON RENARD (*taking a step forward*).

I will.

GILBERT.

You? Who are you?

SIMON RENARD.

The man you want.

GILBERT.

Do you know who I am?

SIMON RENARD.

You are the man I need.

GILBERT.

There is no longer but one thought in my mind, do you know that? To be revenged on Lord Clanbrassil and to die!

SIMON RENARD.

You shall be revenged on Lord Clanbrassil and you shall die.

GILBERT.

Whoever you may be, I thank you.

SIMON RENARD.

Yes, you shall have the vengeance you desire. But do not forget upon what condition. I must have your life.

GILBERT.

Take it.

SIMON RENARD.

It is agreed?

GILBERT.

Yes.

SIMON RENARD.

Follow me!

GILBERT.

Where?

SIMON RENARD.

You shall know.

GILBERT.

Remember that you have promised to avenge me!

SIMON RENARD.

Remember that you have promised to die.

SECOND DAY.

THE QUEEN.

SCENE. — *A room in the royal apartment. The gospel open on a prie-dieu. The royal crown upon a stool. Side doors. A large door in the centre. A portion of the background concealed by a large tapestry, representing a grand tournament.*

SCENE I.

THE QUEEN, *splendidly dressed, reclining upon a couch;* FABIANO FABIANI *seated on a folding-chair. Magnificent costume. The garter.*

FABIANI (*a guitar in his hands, singing*).

When you sleep, calm and pure, love,
In shadow, 'neath my eyes,
And your soft breathing gives my heart
Its tenderest replies;
On your sweet form my eyes can feast,
Oh, beauty's priceless store!
Then sleep, my beauty, sleep, my love,
Sleep on for evermore!

And when you say, "I love you,"
In truth, it seems to be
As if God's heaven were opening
Especially for me.
I see dreams hidden in your eyes
That we 've not dreamed before;
Then love me, oh, my beauty,
Love me for evermore!

You see, the whole of life, dear,
Lies in those words, just four, —
All things that people envy,
All things that men adore,

All things that are seductive
On which our heart sets store,
To sing, to laugh, my beauty,
To sleep, to love, no more!

[*He puts down his guitar.*

Oh, I love you more than I can tell, madame! But this Simon Renard, — this Simon Renard, who is more powerful here than you yourself, — I hate him!

THE QUEEN.

I can't help it, my lord; you know that. He is here as the ambassador of the Prince of Spain, my future husband.

FABIANI.

Your future husband!

THE QUEEN.

Come, my lord, let us not speak of that. I love you! What more do you wish? Moreover, it is time for you to go, now.

FABIANI.

One moment more, Mary!

THE QUEEN.

It is time for the secret council to meet. Until now, there has been only a woman here. We must let the Queen enter.

FABIANI.

I wish the woman would keep the Queen waiting at the door.

THE QUEEN.

You wish, do you? You wish, do you? Look at me, my lord! Fabiani, you have a young and beautiful head!

FABIANI.

It is you who are beautiful, madame. You need only your beauty to be all-powerful. There is something on your head which tells me you are the Queen; but it is written plainer on your brow than on your crown!

THE QUEEN.

Flatterer!

FABIANI.

I love you!

THE QUEEN.

You love me, do you not? You love only me? Say it to me again, just like that, with the same eyes! Alas! we poor women, we never know just what is passing in a man's heart. We have to trust your eyes; and the handsomest eyes, Fabiani, are often the most false. But yours, my lord, are so full of loyalty, so full of candour, so full of good faith, they could not deceive, those eyes, — could they? Yes, my beautiful page, your glances are artless and sincere. Oh, it would be shameful to take such heavenly eyes to betray with! Your eyes are the eyes either of a devil or an angel!

FABIANI.

Neither angel nor devil. A man who loves you!

THE QUEEN.

Who loves the Queen?

FABIANI.

Who loves Mary.

THE QUEEN.

Listen to me, Fabiani. I love you, too. You are young; there are many beautiful women who smile tenderly on you, — I know it. People get tired of queens as well as of other women. — Don't interrupt me! — If you

ever fall in love with another woman, I want you to tell me about it. — Don't interrupt me, dear! — I may forgive you, if you tell me about it. You don't know how much I love you. I don't know myself. It is true, there are moments when I would rather see you dead than happy with another; but there are also moments when I would rather have you happy. Indeed, I don't know why they try to make me out such a wicked woman!

FABIANI.

I can only be happy with you, Mary! I love no one but you!

THE QUEEN.

Are you sure? Look at me! Are you sure? Oh, I am jealous sometimes! I imagine, — where is the woman who does not think of these things? — sometimes I imagine that you are false to me. I would like to be invisible, so that I might follow you, and always know what you are doing, what you are saying, where you are! In fairy stories they tell about a ring which makes one invisible; I would give my crown to have such a ring as that. I keep thinking that you go to see the beautiful women in the city. Oh, you must not deceive me, — indeed, you must not!

FABIANI.

Banish such thoughts from your mind, madame. I false to you, my love, my queen, my kind mistress! To do that, I would have to be the most thankless, the most miserable of men. And I have given you no reason to think me the most thankless, the most miserable of men. I love you, Mary; I adore you! I could not even look at another woman! I love you, I say; but don't you see it in my eyes? There must be some way to persuade you! Look at me well! Do I look like a man

who is false? When a man deceives a woman, you can see it at once. Women are seldom mistaken about that. And what a time you choose to tell me these things, — the one moment in my life when I love you the most! It is true, I am sure I never loved you so much as I do to-day. I am not speaking to the Queen. What do I care about the Queen? What can she do to me? She can have my head cut off; what does that amount to? You, Mary, can break my heart. It is n't your sovereignty that I love, it is yourself. It is your beautiful white and soft hand that I love to kiss; it is n't your sceptre, madame.

THE QUEEN.

Thank you, my Fabiano. Good-bye! Ah, my lord, how young you are! What beautiful black hair, what a graceful head you have! Come back to me in an hour.

FABIANI.

What you call an hour, I call a century!

[*He goes out. As soon as he is gone,* THE QUEEN *rises hastily, goes to a concealed door, opens it, and ushers in* SIMON RENARD.

SCENE II.

THE QUEEN, SIMON RENARD.

THE QUEEN.

Come in, Sir Bailiff! Well, did you stay there? Did you hear him?

SIMON RENARD.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

What do you say to it? Oh, of all men on earth he is the most false, the most deceitful! What do you say to it?

SIMON RENARD.

I say, madame, that it is plain to be seen his name ends in *i*.

THE QUEEN.

Are you sure that he goes to this woman at night? Did you see him?

SIMON RENARD.

I myself, Chandos, Clinton, Montagu. Ten witnesses!

THE QUEEN.

Oh, it is indeed infamous!

SIMON RENARD.

The whole affair will be still better proved to the Queen in a short time. The young woman is here, as I told your Majesty. I had her brought from her house last night.

THE QUEEN.

Is n't this a sufficient crime for his execution, sir?

SIMON RENARD.

What! To go to see a pretty girl by night! Oh, no, madame! Your Majesty had Frogmorton tried for a similar crime. Frogmorton was acquitted.

THE QUEEN.

I punished Frogmorton's judges.

SIMON RENARD.

Try not to have to punish Fabiani's judges.

THE QUEEN.

How shall I revenge myself on this traitor?

SIMON RENARD.

Your Majesty wants only a certain kind of revenge?

THE QUEEN.

The only kind worthy of me!

SIMON RENARD.

Frogmorton was acquitted, madame. There is only one way. I have explained it to your Majesty. The man who is there!

THE QUEEN.

Will he do whatever I wish?

SIMON RENARD.

If you do all that he wishes.

THE QUEEN.

Will he give his life?

SIMON RENARD.

He will make his own conditions, but he will give his life.

THE QUEEN.

What does he want? Do you know?

SIMON RENARD.

What you yourself want, — revenge!

THE QUEEN.

Bid him come in, but stay you out there, within call, Sir Bailiff.

SIMON RENARD (*coming back*).

Madame!

THE QUEEN.

Tell my Lord Chandos to hold himself in the next room, with six men of my ordinance, in readiness to appear. And the woman also, let her be ready to appear. Go. [SIMON RENARD *goes out.*

Oh! it would be frightful!

[THE QUEEN *alone.* *A side door opens;* SIMON RENARD *and* GILBERT *enter.*

SCENE III.

THE QUEEN, GILBERT, SIMON RENARD.

GILBERT.

Before whom do I stand?

SIMON RENARD.

Before the Queen.

GILBERT.

The Queen!

THE QUEEN.

Yes, the Queen. I am the Queen. There is no time for astonishment. You, sir, are Gilbert, a workman, an engraver. You live somewhere beyond the borders of the river, with a woman named Jane, who is your betrothed, and who deceives you, whose lover is a man named Fabiano, who deceives me. You want revenge, so do I. In order to get it, I must be able to make any disposition I please of your life. It is necessary that you should say what I command you to say, no matter what it is. For you, there must be no longer

either false or true, good or bad, justice or injustice, — nothing but my vengeance and my will. I shall require you to let me act, and to let yourself be acted upon. Do you consent?

GILBERT.

Madame —

THE QUEEN.

You shall have your revenge; but I warn you, it will cost you your life, — that is all. Make your conditions. If you have an old mother and you want her tablecloth covered with ingots of gold, speak, I will do it. Sell me your life as dear as you please.

GILBERT.

I am no longer willing to die, madame.

THE QUEEN.

What!

GILBERT.

I have been thinking about it all night. Nothing is proved yet. I saw a man who boasted that he was Jane's lover. How do I know that he did not lie? I saw a key! How do I know that he did not steal it? I saw a letter! How do I know that she was not forced to write it? I don't even know whether it was her writing; it was dark, I was excited, I could not see. I can't give up my life, which is her life, like that. I don't believe any of it, I am not sure of any of it, I have not seen Jane!

THE QUEEN.

It is easy to see that you love. You are like me, you refuse all the proofs. But if you see her, your Jane, if you hear her confess the crime, will you do what I wish?

GILBERT.

Yes, upon one condition.

THE QUEEN.

Tell it to me afterwards. [*To* SIMON RENARD.] Bring this woman here at once.

[SIMON RENARD *goes out.* THE QUEEN *places* GILBERT *behind a curtain which covers part of the background of the apartment.*

Stand there!

[JANE *enters, pale and trembling.*

SCENE IV.

THE QUEEN; JANE; GILBERT, *behind the curtain.*

THE QUEEN.

Approach, young woman. You know who we are?

JANE.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

You know who is the man who seduced you?

JANE.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

He deceived you. He passed himself off for a nobleman called Amyas Pawlet?

JANE.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

You know now that it is Fabiano Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil?

JANE.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

Last night, when they seized you in your house, you had given him a rendezvous, you were waiting for him?

JANE (*wringing her hands*).

Heavens, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Answer!

JANE (*with feeble voice*).

Yes.

THE QUEEN.

You understand that there is no more hope, neither for him nor for you?

JANE.

Nothing but death! That is a hope!

THE QUEEN.

Tell me all about it. Where did you meet this man first?

JANE.

The first time I saw him was — But what is the use? A poor wretched girl of the people, frivolous and vain, in love with jewels and fine clothes, a girl dazzled with the handsome looks of a great lord, — that is all. I am seduced, I am dishonoured, I am lost. There is nothing to add to that. My God, madame, don't you see that each word I speak is killing me?

THE QUEEN.

Enough.

JANE.

Your anger is terrible, I know it, madame. My head bends now beneath the punishment you have prepared for me.

THE QUEEN.

Punishment for you? Do you think I concern myself about you, simpleton? Who are you, wretched creature, that the Queen should concern herself about you? Oh, no! Fabiano is my affair. As for you, madame, some one else will look out for your punishment.

JANE.

Well, madame, whoever that one may be, whatever the punishment, I will endure all without a murmur. I will even thank you if you will listen to one prayer I am about to make. There is a man who took me in, an orphan from my birth, who adopted me, brought me up, nourished me, loved me, and who loves me still; a man of whom I am most unworthy, towards whom I have been most guilty, and yet whose image lies at the bottom of my heart, beloved, revered, sacred as is that of God; a man who now, while I am speaking to you, finds his home empty, deserted, robbed, who can't understand it, and who rends his garments in anguish. Well, madame, what I ask of your Majesty is that he may never understand, that I may disappear without his knowing what has become of me, what I have done, or what you have done with me. Alas, kind Heaven, I do not know how to make you understand, but you ought to feel that I have a friend in him, — a noble, generous friend. Poor Gilbert! yes, it is true, he respects me and believes me pure, and I do not want him to hate me and despise me! Oh, you understand me, don't you, madame? That man's respect is a great deal more to me than my life. And then it will make him suffer so much, — such a

surprise! He won't believe it at first. No, he will not believe it. My God! Poor Gilbert. Oh, madame, have pity on him and on me! He has done you no harm! In the name of Heaven, keep him from knowing the awful truth! In the name of Heaven, don't let him know that I am guilty. He will kill himself. Don't let him know that I am dead. He will die too.

THE QUEEN.

The man you are speaking of is here; he is listening to you; he will judge you, he will punish you!

[GILBERT *appears.*

JANE.

Heavens! Gilbert!

GILBERT (*to* THE QUEEN).

My life belongs to you, madame.

THE QUEEN.

Good! Have you any conditions to make?

GILBERT.

Yes, madame!

THE QUEEN.

What are they? We give you our royal word that we will grant them.

GILBERT.

This, madame. It is very simple. It is a debt of gratitude I pay to one of your noble lords, who employed me a great deal in my capacity as engraver.

THE QUEEN.

Speak!

GILBERT.

This lord has a secret liaison with a woman whom he cannot marry because she belongs to a proscribed

family. This woman, who up to the present time has lived in concealment, is the only daughter and heiress of the last Lord Talbot, beheaded under King Henry VIII.

THE QUEEN.

What? Are you sure of what you are saying? You say, John Talbot, the good Catholic lord, the loyal defender of my mother of Aragon, has left a daughter? Upon my crown, if that is true, this child is my daughter. And what John Talbot did for the mother of Mary of England, Mary of England will do for the daughter of John Talbot.

GILBERT.

Then, of course, it will be a pleasure to your Majesty to give back Lord Talbot's estates to his daughter?

THE QUEEN.

Yes, truly, and to take them away from Fabiano. But are there proofs that this heiress exists?

GILBERT.

There are!

THE QUEEN.

And if there are not, we will make them! We are not a queen for nothing!

GILBERT.

Your Majesty will give back to Lord Talbot's daughter the estates, lands, rank, coat-of-arms, and device of her father. Your Majesty will remove her from all proscription, and will guarantee that her life shall be safe. Your Majesty will marry her to this lord, who is the only man she can marry. Upon these conditions, madame, you can dispose of me, of my liberty, of my life, and of my will as you see fit.

THE QUEEN.

Good! I will do what you have asked.

GILBERT.

Your Majesty will do what I have asked? The Queen of England swears it to me, Gilbert the engraver, upon her crown which is here, and upon the open gospel which is there?

THE QUEEN.

Upon the royal crown which is here, and the divine gospel which is there, I swear it.

GILBERT.

The compact is concluded, madame. Have a tomb prepared for me and a nuptial bed prepared for the lovers. The lord I speak of is Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil. Talbot's heiress, behold her!

JANE.

What does he say?

THE QUEEN.

Am I dealing with a fool? What do you mean? Have a care, sir! You are bold to mock the Queen of England! In the royal chambers people should look to their words; there are times when the lips bring the head to the block!

GILBERT.

You have my head, madame; I have your oath.

THE QUEEN.

You do not mean to say you are speaking seriously? This Fabiano — this Jane! Come, come!

GILBERT.

This Jane is the daughter and the heiress of Lord Talbot.

THE QUEEN.

Bah! Nonsense! Delusion! Fancy! Have you got the proofs?

GILBERT.

Complete! [*He takes a packet from his breast.*
Read these papers.

THE QUEEN.

Have I time to read your papers? Did I ask for your papers? What do your papers matter to me? If they prove anything, upon my soul, I will throw them into the fire and nothing will be left of them.

GILBERT.

Nothing but your oath, madame!

THE QUEEN.

My oath, my oath!

GILBERT.

Upon the crown and upon the gospel, madame; that is to say, on your head and your soul, — on your life in this world, and on your life in the next.

THE QUEEN.

But what do you want? Oh, I swear you are mad!

GILBERT.

What do I want? Jane has lost her rank, give it back to her! Jane has lost her honour, give it back to her! Proclaim her the daughter of Lord Talbot and the wife of Lord Clanbrassil, and then take my life.

THE QUEEN.

Your life! What do you want me to do with your life then? I didn't want it except to use for vengeance on this man, — this Fabiano. You can't understand anything at all, can you? Well! I can't understand you,

either. You talked about vengeance! That is the way you avenge yourself, is it? These men of the people are stupid! And after all, do you suppose I believe your ridiculous story about an heiress of Talbot? The papers! You show me papers! I won't look at them. Oh, a woman wrongs you, and you play the magnanimous. Well, do it if it suits you! I am not magnanimous! No! My heart is full of rage and hate. I will avenge myself and you shall help me! Oh, but this man is mad, mad, mad! My God! why do I need him? It is exasperating to have to deal with people like this, at such a serious time.

GILBERT.

I have your word, as Catholic Queen. Lord Clanbrassil has seduced Jane; he shall marry her!

THE QUEEN.

And if he refuses to marry her?

GILBERT.

You will force him to do it.

JANE.

Oh, no! Have pity upon me, Gilbert!

GILBERT.

Well, then, if this infamous wretch refuses, your Majesty can do what she pleases with him and with me!

THE QUEEN (*with joy*).

Ah, that is all I ask!

GILBERT.

In that case, I will do everything the Queen commands, provided the crown of the Countess of Waterford

is solemnly replaced by the Queen on the sacred and inviolable head of Jane, who stands here!

THE QUEEN.

Everything?

GILBERT.

Everything! Even a crime, if it is a crime you want. I will not stop at treachery, which is more than a crime; nor at infamy, which is more than treachery.

THE QUEEN.

You will say what I want you to say? You will die the death that I want you to die?

GILBERT.

The death that you want me to die!

JANE.

Oh, my God!

THE QUEEN.

You swear it?

GILBERT.

I swear it!

THE QUEEN.

Then it is settled. It is enough! I have your word, you have mine! It is agreed.

[*She seems to reflect a moment.*

[*To* JANE.] You are not needed here: go out. I will send for you.

JANE.

Oh, Gilbert, what is this you have done? Oh, Gilbert, I am a wretched creature, and I don't dare to raise my eyes to you. Oh, Gilbert, you are more than an angel, for you have the virtues of an angel and a man's passions at the same time.

[*She goes out.*

SCENE V.

THE QUEEN, GILBERT, *afterwards* SIMON RENARD, LORD CHANDOS, *and the Guards.*

THE QUEEN (*to* GILBERT).

Have you a weapon about you? A knife, a dagger, anything!

GILBERT (*drawing from his breast* LORD CLANBRASSIL'S *dagger*).

A dagger? Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

Good! Hold it in your hand!

[*She seizes his arm quickly.*

Sir bailiff D'Amont! Lord Chandos!

[*Enter* SIMON RENARD, LORD CHANDOS *and Guards.*

Seize this man! He has threatened my life, with his dagger! I seized his arm as he was about to strike me. He is an assassin!

GILBERT.

Madame!

THE QUEEN (*low to* GILBERT).

Have you forgotten your agreement so soon? Is this the way you let me use you? [*Aloud.*] You are all witnesses that he had a dagger in his hand. Sir Bailiff, what is the name of the executioner of the Tower of London?

SIMON RENARD.

He is an Irishman called Mac Dermot.

THE QUEEN.

Send for him. I want to speak to him.

SIMON RENARD.

Yourself?

THE QUEEN.

Myself.

SIMON RENARD.

The Queen will speak to the executioner?

THE QUEEN.

Yes, the Queen will speak to the executioner. The head will speak to the hand! Send for him.

[*A Guard goes out.*

My Lord Chandos, and you, gentlemen, will answer to me for this man. Keep him there among you, back of you. Certain things are about to happen here which he must witness. Sir Lieutenant d'Amont, is Lord Clanbrassil in the palace?

SIMON RENARD.

He is there, in the painted chamber, awaiting the Queen's good pleasure to see him.

THE QUEEN.

Does he suspect anything?

SIMON RENARD.

Nothing.

THE QUEEN (*to* LORD CHANDOS).

Let him come in!

SIMON RENARD.

The entire Court is also waiting there. Will nobody be admitted before Lord Clanbrassil?

THE QUEEN.

Who are those amongst our nobles who hate Fabiani?

SIMON RENARD.

All!

THE QUEEN.

Which hate him the most?

SIMON RENARD.

Clinton, Montagu, Somerset, Earl of Derby, Gerard Fitz-Gerard, Lord Paget, and the Lord Chancellor.

THE QUEEN (*to* LORD CHANDOS).

Admit them all — except the Lord Chancellor. Go!

[CHANDOS *goes out.*

[*To* SIMON RENARD.] The worthy Bishop Chancellor is not any fonder of Fabiani than the rest, but he is a more scrupulous man.

[*Noticing the papers which* GILBERT *left upon the table.* Ah, I must look over these papers!

[*While she is examining them, the door in the background opens. Those lords designated by* THE QUEEN *enter, making profound salutations.*

SCENE VI.

The same. LORD CLINTON *and the other lords.*

THE QUEEN.

Good-day, gentlemen! God be with you, my lords! [*To* LORD MONTAGU.] Anthony Brown, I do not forget that you held your own most worthily against John of Montmorency and the Count of Toulouse during my negotiations with my uncle, the Emperor! Lord Paget, to-day you will receive your letters patent of Baron

Paget de Beaudesert in Stafford. And this is our old friend, Lord Clinton. We are always your good friend, my lord. It was you who exterminated Thomas Wyatt in St. James's Field. Let us all remember it, my lords. The crown of England was saved that day by a bridge which enabled my troops to reach the rebels, and by a wall which prevented the rebels from reaching me! The bridge was London Bridge. The wall was my Lord Clinton!

LORD CLINTON (*low to* SIMON RENARD).

The Queen has not spoken to me for six months. How kind she is to-day!

SIMON RENARD (*low to* LORD CLINTON).

Patience, my lord. She will be kinder still, by-and-by.

THE QUEEN (*to* LORD CHANDOS).

My Lord Clanbrassil may enter. [*To* SIMON RENARD.] After he has been here a few moments —

[*She speaks to him in a low voice and indicates the door through which* JANE *passed.*

SIMON RENARD.

I understand, madame. [FABIANI *enters.*

SCENE VII.

The same. FABIANI.

THE QUEEN.

Ah, here he is!

[*She continues to speak to* SIMON RENARD *in a low voice*

FABIANI (*everybody salutes him ; he looks around him. Aside*).

What does this mean? There are only my enemies here, this morning! The Queen is speaking in a low tone to Simon Renard. The devil! She is laughing! It is a bad sign.

THE QUEEN (*graciously to* FABIANI).

God be with you, my lord!

FABIANI (*seizing her hand which he kisses*).

Madame — [*Aside.*] She smiled at me! The danger is not for me!

THE QUEEN (*still graciously*).

I want to speak to you.

[*She advances to the front of the stage with him.*

FABIANI.

And I also, I want to speak to you, madame. I have a right to reproach you! To keep me away, to exile me so long! Ah, it would n't be thus if you thought of me during these hours of absence as I think of you!

THE QUEEN.

You are unjust. Since you left me, I have thought of no one but you!

FABIANI.

Is that really true? Does so much happiness belong to me? Say it to me again!

THE QUEEN (*always smiling*).

I swear it to you!

FABIANI.

Then you do indeed love me as I love you?

THE QUEEN.

Yes, my lord! Truly, I have thought of no one but you. So much so, that I have tried to plan a pleasant surprise for your return.

FABIANI.

What do you mean? What surprise?

THE QUEEN.

A meeting which will give you pleasure!

FABIANI.

A meeting with whom?

THE QUEEN.

Guess! Can't you guess?

FABIANI.

No, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Turn around!

[*He turns and sees* JANE *on the threshold of the little door, which is half open.*

FABIANI (*aside*).

Jane!

JANE (*aside*).

It is he!

THE QUEEN (*with the same smile*).

My lord, do you know this young woman?

FABIANI.

No, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Young woman, do you know this lord?

JANE.

Truth before life! Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

So, my lord, you do not know this woman?

FABIANI.

Madame, this is a conspiracy. I am surrounded by enemies. This woman is doubtless in league with them. I do not know her, madame! I do not even know who she is, madame!

THE QUEEN (*rising and striking him in the face with her glove*).

Ah, you are a coward! You betray one and disown the other! You don't even know who she is! Do you want me to tell you? This woman is Jane Talbot, daughter of John Talbot, the good Catholic lord who perished on the scaffold for my mother. This woman is Jane Talbot, my cousin: Jane Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, Countess of Wexford, Countess of Waterford, peeress of England. That is who she is, this woman! Lord Paget, you are commissioner of the private seal; you will remember our words. The Queen of England solemnly recognizes this woman here present, as Jane, daughter and sole heiress of the last Earl of Waterford. [*Showing the papers.*] Here are the titles and the proofs, which you will have sealed with the great seal. It is our will.

[*To* FABIANI.] Yes, Countess of Waterford, and it is proved! And you will give back her estates, you wretched man! Ah, you don't know this woman? You don't know who she is? Well, I am telling you! It is Jane Talbot. Shall I tell you more yet?

[*Looking him in the face, in a low voice, between her teeth.*

Coward, she is your mistress!

FABIANI.

Madame!

THE QUEEN.

That is what she is! Now, this is what you are! You are a man without soul, a man without heart, a man without brains. You are a liar and a villain! You are — By my faith, gentlemen, you need not draw away. I am quite willing you should hear what I have to say to this man. I am not lowering my voice, it seems to me. Fabiano, you are a wretch; a traitor to me, a coward to her; a lying lackey, the most vile, the lowest of all men. Yet it is true, I made you Earl of Clanbrassil, Baron of Dinasmonddy and what more? Baron of Darmouth in Devonshire. Ah, well! I was an idiot! My lords, I ask your pardon for having forced you to be elbowed by that man there. You, a knight! you, a noble! you, a lord! Compare yourself a little with those who are such. Look! look around you! There stand noblemen. There is Bridges, Baron Chandos; there is Seymour, Duke of Somerset. There are the Stanleys, who have been Earls of Derby since 1485. There are the Clintons, who have been barons since 1298. Do you imagine you are like these people, — you? You say that you are allied to the Spanish family of Peñalver, but it is not true; you are only a bad Italian. Nothing, —worse than nothing! Son of a shoe-maker in the village of Larino! Yes, gentlemen, the son of a shoe-maker! I knew it, and I did not tell it; I concealed it, and I made believe I credited this man when he talked about his nobility. That is the way we are, we women. Oh, Heaven! I wish there were women here; it would be a lesson to them all. This scoundrel! this scoundrel! he betrays one woman and disowns the other. Infamous creature! Oh, yes, indeed you are infamous. What! I have been speaking all this time and he is not yet on

his knees? On your knees, Fabiani! My lords, force this man to kneel!

FABIANI.

Your Majesty —

THE QUEEN.

This creature whom I have loaded with benefits! this Neapolitan lackey whom I have made a noble knight and a proud earl of England. Ah, I ought to have expected this! But I am always like that; I am obstinate, and afterwards I see that I am wrong. It is my fault. Italian stands for liar: Neapolitan for coward. Every time that my father made use of an Italian, he repented of it. This Fabiani! You see Lady Jane, unfortunate child, to what a man you have surrendered yourself! But I will avenge you. Oh, I ought to have known it from the first. You will find nothing in an Italian's pocket but a stiletto, nothing in his soul but treachery.

FABIANI.

Madame, I swear to you —

THE QUEEN.

Good! Now he will perjure himself; he will descend to the depths of infamy; he will make us blush to our finger-tips before these men, — we women who have loved him. He will not even lift up his head!

FABIANI.

Yes, madame, I will lift it up! I am lost; I see it clearly. My death is decided. You will make use of every means, dagger, poison —

THE QUEEN (*taking hold of both his hands and dragging him violently to the front of the stage*).

Poison! Dagger! What are you saying, Italian? A treacherous vengeance, a disgraceful vengeance, — a

vengeance from the back, a vengeance such as you take in your country? No, Signor Fabiani, neither dagger nor poison. Do I have to conceal myself? Do I have to hide in the corners of the street at night and make myself small when I want revenge? No, by my faith, I want the daylight! Do you hear, my lord? — the full noonday, the bright sun, the public square, the axe and the stake, the crowds in the street, the crowds at the windows, the crowds on the roofs! A hundred thousand witnesses! I want people to be afraid, do you hear, my lord? I want them to think it splendid, frightful, magnificent. I want them to say, "It is a woman who has been wronged, but it is a Queen who takes revenge!" This much envied favourite, this handsome, insolent young man, whom I have dressed in velvets and satins, I want to see him bent double, terrified and trembling, on his knees before a black cloth, with naked feet, with manacled wrists, hissed by the people, fingered by the executioner. On this white neck, where I have put a golden collar, I want to put a rope. I have seen how Fabiani looks upon a throne, I want to see how he looks upon a scaffold.

FABIANI.

Madame —

THE QUEEN.

Not a word! Not a word! You are indeed lost, as you say. You will mount the scaffold as did Suffolk and Northumberland. This will be a festival such as I have given before to my good city of London. You know how she hates you, this good city of mine! Faith, when one wants vengeance, it's a good thing to be Mary, Queen of England, daughter of Henry VIII. and mistress of four seas. When you are on the scaffold, you can make a long speech to the people, if you like, as Northumberland did, or a long prayer to God, as Suffolk did, in

order to give pardon the time to arrive; but God is my witness that you are a traitor, and the pardon will not come. This wretched liar who talked of love to me, and this morning even said "thou" to me — Eh, gentlemen, it seems to amaze you that I talk thus openly before you; but I repeat it, what do I care?

[*To* Lord Somerset.] My lord duke, you are constable of the Tower; demand this man's sword!

FABIANI.

Here it is; but I protest. Admitting that it is proved that I deceived or seduced a woman —

THE QUEEN.

What does it matter to me whether you have seduced a woman? Do I concern myself about that? These gentlemen are witnesses, it is a matter of indifference to me!

FABIANI.

The seduction of a woman is not a capital offence, madame. Your Majesty could not procure Frogmorton's condemnation upon the same accusation!

THE QUEEN.

I believe he defies us now! The worm has become a serpent. Who says you are accused of that?

FABIANI.

Of what else am I accused? I am not an Englishman; I am no subject of your Majesty. I am a subject of the King of Naples and a vassal of the Holy Father. I will appeal to his ambassador, the eminent Cardinal Polus, to save me. I will defend myself, madame. I am a stranger! I cannot be tried unless I have committed a crime, — a real crime. What is my crime?

THE QUEEN.

You ask what your crime is?

FABIANI.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

You all hear this question that he has asked, my lords? You shall hear the answer. Listen, and look out for yourselves, all of you, however great you may be, because you will see that I need only stamp upon the earth with my foot to bring from out of it a scaffold. Chandos, open that folding-door. Call the Court, — every one! Bid every one enter.

[*The door at the back is opened. The entire Court enters.*

SCENE VIII.

The same. The LORD CHANCELLOR, *all the Court.*

THE QUEEN.

Enter, enter, my lords! I am truly pleased to see you to-day. Good! good! The officers of the law this way: nearer, nearer! Where are the sergeants-at-arms of the House of Lords? Harriot and Herbert? Ah, there you are, gentlemen! Be welcome! Draw your swords. Good! Place yourselves at the right and at the left of that man. He is your prisoner.

FABIANI.

Madame, what is my crime?

THE QUEEN.

My Lord Gardiner, my learned friend, you are chancellor of England. We order you and the twelve lord

commissioners of the Star Chamber, whom we regret not to see here, to assemble yourselves in haste. Strange things are passing in this palace. Listen, my lords! Madame Elizabeth has raised more than one enemy to our crown. We have had the Pietro Caro plot, — that man who started the Exeter movement, and who communicated with Madame Elizabeth by means of a cipher cut on her guitar. We have had the treachery of Thomas Wyatt who roused the county of Kent. We have had the rebellion of the Duke of Suffolk, who was captured in the hollow of a tree, after his followers were defeated. To-day we have a new attempt. Listen, all of you. To-day, this morning, a man presented himself at my audience. After a few words, he drew his dagger on me. I stopped his hand in time. Lord Chandos and the bailiff D'Amont seized the man. He says that he was urged to the crime by Lord Clanbrassil.

FABIANI.

By me! It is not true! This is a frightful thing! This man does not exist. This man cannot be found! Who is he? Where is he?

THE QUEEN.

He is here!

GILBERT (*coming out from among the soldiers, behind whom he has been hidden up to this time*).

I am the man!

THE QUEEN.

According to this man's declarations, we Mary, Queen, accuse before the Star Chamber this other man, Fabiano Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil, of high treason, and of an attempt of regicide upon our imperial and sacred person.

FABIANI.

Regicide? I? This is monstrous. Oh, my brain is bewildered! I cannot see clear! What is this trap? Whoever you may be, wretched creature, dare you affirm that what the Queen says is true?

GILBERT.

Yes!

FABIANI.

I urged you to regicide?

GILBERT.

Yes.

FABIANI.

Yes, always yes! Malediction! Oh, it is impossible for you to know how false that is, gentlemen. That man comes from hell! Unfortunate wretch, you want to ruin me, but don't you see that you ruin yourself in the same breath? The crime you charge upon me falls upon you too. You will send me to the block, but you will die also. Madman, with a single word you cause two heads to fall! Did you know that?

GILBERT.

I know it.

FABIANI.

My lords, this man is bribed —

GILBERT.

By you. Here is the purse full of gold which you paid me for the crime. Your crest and your monogram are embroidered upon it.

FABIANI.

Just Heaven! But you don't show me the dagger with which this man, it is said, attempted to strike the Queen. Where is the dagger?

LORD CHANDOS.

Here it is!

GILBERT (*to* FABIANI).

It is yours. You gave it to me for that purpose. They will find the sheath at your house!

THE LORD CHANCELLOR.

Earl of Clanbrassil, what reply do you make? Do you recognize this man?

FABIANI.

No!

GILBERT.

In truth, he only saw me by night. Let me whisper two words to him, madame, they will help his memory. [*He approaches* FABIANI.] My lord, you appear to recognize no one to-day,—neither the man you have wronged, nor the woman you have seduced. Ah, the Queen avenges herself; but the man of the people, he avenges himself also. You defied me to do it, I think. Behold yourself caught between a double vengeance, my lord! What do you say to that? I am Gilbert the engraver!

FABIANI.

Yes, I recognize you. My lords, I recognize this man. Since it is with him I have to deal, I have nothing more to say.

THE QUEEN.

He confesses!

THE LORD CHANCELLOR (*to* GILBERT).

According to Norman law and Statute 25, Henry VIII., in a case of high treason of the first degree, a confession does not save the accomplice. Do not forget, it is a case wherein the Queen has not the right of mercy, and you will die upon the scaffold as well as the man you accuse. Therefore reflect! Do you confirm all you have said?

GILBERT.

I know that I shall die, and I confirm it.

JANE (*aside*).

My God! if this is a dream, it is very horrible.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR (*to* GILBERT).

Are you willing to repeat your statements with your hand upon the gospel?

[*He presents the gospel to* GILBERT, *who puts his hand upon it.*

GILBERT.

With my hand upon the gospel, and my approaching death before my eyes, I swear that this man is an assassin; that this dagger, which is his, was used for the crime; that this purse, which is his, was given to me in payment for the crime. May God help me! It is the truth!

THE LORD CHANCELLOR (*to* FABIANI).

My lord, what have you to say?

FABIANI.

Nothing! I am lost.

SIMON RENARD (*low to* THE QUEEN).

Your Majesty sent for the executioner. He is there!

THE QUEEN.

Good! Let him come in!

[*The row of noblemen divides and the Executioner appears; he is dressed in red and black, and on his shoulder bears a long sword in its scabbard.*

SCENE IX.

The same. EXECUTIONER.

THE QUEEN.

My lord Duke of Somerset, these two men to the Tower! My Lord Gardiner, our chancellor, let their trial before the twelve peers of the Star Chamber commence to-morrow, and may God keep watch over England. We expect them to be judged, both of them, before we leave for Exford, where we are to open Parliament, and for Windsor, where we are to spend Easter.

[*To the* EXECUTIONER.] Approach! I am glad to see you! You are a faithful servant. You are old; you have already witnessed three reigns. It is customary for the sovereigns of this kingdom to make you as costly a gift as possible, upon their ascension. My father, Henry VIII., gave you the diamond clasp of his cloak. My brother, Edward VI. gave you a goblet of chased gold. It is my turn now; I have not given you anything yet. I must give you a present. Come nearer! [*Indicating* FABIANI.] Do you see that head, — that young, adorable head; that head, which, up to this morning, was the dearest, the most precious thing to me, in all my kingdom? Well! that head — look at it well — I give it to you!

THIRD DAY. — PART I.

WHICH OF THE TWO?

SCENE. — *Hall in the interior of the Tower of London. Pointed arch upheld by large pillars. To the right and to the left two low doors to two cells. To the right a dormer-window which is supposed to overlook the Thames. To the left a dormer-window, which is supposed to overlook the streets. On each side a door concealed in the wall. In the background, a gallery with a sort of balcony shut in by glass and overlooking the exterior courts of the Tower.*

SCENE I.

GILBERT, JOSHUA.

GILBERT.

Well?

JOSHUA.

Alas!

GILBERT.

No more hope?

JOSHUA.

No more hope. [GILBERT *goes to the window.*
You won't see anything from the window.

GILBERT.

You inquired, did n't you?

JOSHUA.

I am only too sure.

GILBERT.

It is for Fabiani?

JOSHUA.

It is for Fabiani.

GILBERT.

How fortunate that man is! Maledictions on me!

JOSHUA.

Poor Gilbert! Your turn will come! To-day, it is he; to-morrow it will be you!

GILBERT.

What do you say? We are not thinking of the same thing. What are you talking about?

JOSHUA.

About the scaffold which they are building.

GILBERT.

And I, — I am speaking of Jane!

JOSHUA.

Of Jane?

GILBERT.

Yes, of Jane! Only of Jane. What does the rest matter to me? You have forgotten, have you? You don't remember that for one whole month, glued to the bars of my cell, from which I can look into the street, I have watched her, pale and sad, wandering around the base of this tower, which holds two men, Fabiani and me. You have forgotten all about my anguish, have you, and my doubts, my misgivings? For which of us does she come? Poor wretch, I ask myself this question day and night. I asked you, Joshua; and last night you promised to try to see her, and speak to her. Oh, tell me! Did you learn anything! Is it for me she comes, or is it for Fabiani?

JOSHUA.

I learned that Fabiani is certainly to be beheaded to-day, and you to-morrow, and from that moment I confess I lost my head, Gilbert. The scaffold drove Jane entirely out of my thoughts. Your death —

GILBERT.

My death! What do you mean by that word! My death is that Jane loves me no longer. From the day that I was no longer beloved, I was dead. Oh, yes! truly dead. Joshua, what has remained of me since that time won't be worth taking to-morrow. Oh, Joshua, you don't know, you can't understand what a man is when he loves. If any one had said to me, two months ago, "Jane, your Jane without reproach, your Jane so pure, your love, your pride, your lily, your treasure, Jane will give herself to another; will you take her then?" I should have said, "No, I will not have her! rather death a thousand times for her and for myself." And I should have crushed under my feet any one who had dared to speak to me like that. If I would take her? — To-day, you know, Jane is no longer the Jane without stain, whom I adored, the Jane whose brow I hardly dared touch with my lips. Jane has given herself to another, — to a wretch! I know it — and — well, it 's all the same to me. I love her! My heart is broken, but I love her! I would kiss the hem of her dress, and I would ask her pardon, if she would only take me. She might be in the gutter with those who belong there, and I would take her out, and I would hold her close to my heart, Joshua! Joshua, I would give, not a hundred years of life since I no longer possess one day, but the eternity which will be mine to-morrow, just to see her smile at me once more, — just once more before my death, — and to have her say to me those dear words she used to

say, "I love you." Joshua, Joshua, that is the way a man's heart is, when he loves. You think you would kill the woman who betrays you? No, you would n't kill her; you would lie at her feet afterwards, the same as before, only you would be sad. You think I am weak? What should I have gained in killing Jane? Oh, my heart will burst with all these unbearable thoughts! If she only loved me now, what would it matter to me, what she has done? But she loves Fabiani! But she loves Fabiani! It is for Fabiani that she comes here! There is one thing that is sure, it is that I want to die. Have pity on me, Joshua!

JOSHUA.

Fabiani will die to-day.

GILBERT.

And I to-morrow.

JOSHUA.

God is above all.

GILBERT.

I will be revenged on him to-day. To-morrow, he will be revenged on me!

JOSHUA.

My brother, here is the second constable of the Tower, Master Eneas Dulverton. You must go in. I will see you again to-night.

GILBERT.

Oh, to die without being beloved! To have no one to weep for us! Jane! Jane! Jane! [*Re-enters his cell.*

JOSHUA.

Poor Gilbert! Good God! Who could have foretold that what has happened would happen?

[*Goes out.* *Enter* SIMON RENARD *and* MASTER ENEAS.

SCENE II.

SIMON RENARD, MASTER ENEAS DULVERTON.

SIMON RENARD.

As you say, it is very extraordinary. But what can you expect? The Queen is crazy. She does n't know what she wants. You can't count upon anything. She is a woman. I would like to know what she is here for. Well! a woman's heart is a riddle of which King Francis I. wrote the solution on that pane of glass at Chambord,—

> "A woman's heart is most capricious;
> Who trusts her, finds life not propitious."

Listen to me, Master Eneas. We are old friends; we must get through with this thing to-day. Everything here depends upon you. If you are ordered — [*He whispers to Eneas.*] be slow about it; let it fall through skilfully. Let me have two clear hours before me to-night, and what I want will be accomplished; to-morrow there will be no favourite. I shall be all-powerful, and you will be baronet and lieutenant of the Tower the day after. Do you understand?

MASTER ENEAS.

I understand.

SIMON RENARD.

Very well. Some one is coming. We must not be seen together. Go out that way. I am going to meet the Queen.

[*They separate.*

SCENE III.

A JAILER *enters with caution, then ushers in* LADY JANE.

THE JAILER.

You are where you wished to be, my lady. Here are the doors to the two cells. My recompense, now, if you please.

[JANE *unfastens her diamond bracelet and gives it to him.*

JANE.

There it is.

THE JAILER.

Thanks. Don't compromise me. [*He goes out.*

JANE (*alone*).

Kind Heaven! What shall I do? It is I who have destroyed him. I must be the one to save him! I can never do it, never! A woman can do nothing! The scaffold! The scaffold — Oh, it is horrible! Come, no more tears; let us have action! I never can do it! I never can do it! Have mercy on me, my God! I think some one is coming. Whose voice is that? I recognize it. It is the Queen's voice! Ah, all is lost!

[*She hides behind a pillar.* THE QUEEN *and* SIMON RENARD *enter.*

SCENE IV.

THE QUEEN; SIMON RENARD; JANE, *concealed.*

THE QUEEN.

Ah, the change surprises you? I am no longer myself? Well, what does that matter to me? It is the truth! I don't want him to die — now!

SIMON RENARD.

Yet yesterday, your Majesty ordered the execution to take place to-day.

THE QUEEN.

As I ordered the day before, that the execution should take place yesterday. As I ordered Sunday that the execution should take place Monday. To-day I order the execution to take place to-morrow.

SIMON RENARD.

As a matter of fact, since the second Sunday in Advent, when the decision was pronounced in the Star Chamber, and the two criminals came back to the Tower preceded by the executioner with the axe turned toward them, — and that was three weeks ago, — every day since then your Majesty has put the matter off until to-morrow.

THE QUEEN.

Well, can't you understand what that means, sir? Must I explain everything, and must a woman be forced to show her naked heart to you, because she is a Queen, — unfortunate woman that she is, — and because you represent the Prince of Spain, her future husband? You don't understand, you men, that with a woman the

heart has its chastity as well as the body. Well, then, yes, — since you want to know, since you make believe that you don't understand anything, — yes, every day I put off Fabiani's execution until to-morrow, because every morning my courage fails me when I think that the bell of the Tower of London will ring out his death-knell; because to think they are sharpening an axe for that man, breaks my heart; because it kills me to think they will nail a coffin over him; because I am a woman, because I am weak, because I am insane, because I love him yet, my God! There! have you got enough? Are you satisfied? Do you understand now? Oh, some day, my lord, I will have my revenge on you, for all these things you have made me tell you!

SIMON RENARD.

Yet it ought to be about time to get through with this Fabiani! You expect to marry my royal master, the Prince of Spain, madame!

THE QUEEN.

If the Prince of Spain is not satisfied, let him say so; we will marry somebody else. Suitors are not lacking. The son of the King of the Romans, the Prince of Piedmont, the Infante of Portugal, Cardinal Polus, the King of Denmark, and Lord Courtenay are as good noblemen as he!

SIMON RENARD.

Lord Courtenay! Lord Courtenay!

THE QUEEN.

An English baron is worth a Spanish prince, my lord. Besides, Lord Courtenay is descended from the emperors of the East. Oh, get mad if you like!

SIMON RENARD.

Fabiani has made himself hated by every one in London who has got a heart.

THE QUEEN.

Except by me!

SIMON RENARD.

Peasants and lords are united against him, and if he is not executed this very day, as your Majesty has promised —

THE QUEEN.

Well!

SIMON RENARD.

There will be an uprising among the people.

THE QUEEN.

I 've got my lansquenets.

SIMON RENARD.

There will be a conspiracy among the nobles.

THE QUEEN.

I have the executioner.

SIMON RENARD.

Your Majesty swore upon your mother's prayer-book that you would not pardon him.

THE QUEEN.

Here is a signature in blank which he has sent to me, in which I swear on my imperial crown that I will pardon him! My father's crown is worth as much as my mother's prayer-book. One oath destroys the other. But who says that I will pardon him?

SIMON RENARD.

He has boldly betrayed you, madame!

THE QUEEN.

What does that matter? All men are alike about that. I don't want him to die. Listen, my lord — I mean Sir Bailiff; Good God! you confuse my mind so much that I can't even tell whom I am talking to. Oh, I know all that you want to say to me! I know he is a vile, degraded, contemptible man. I know it as well as you, and I blush for it. But I love him! What do you want me to do about it? I would probably love a better man less. Moreover, who are you — all of you — great as you may be? Are you any better than he? You will tell me that he is a favourite, and the English nation detests favourites! Don't I know that you only want to overthrow him to put the Earl of Kildare, — that fool, that Irishman, — in his place, that he may have twenty heads a day cut off? What does that matter to you? Don't talk to me about your Prince of Spain; you make light enough of him. Don't talk to me about the anger of M. de Noailles, the French ambassador! M. de Noailles is an idiot, and I will tell him so to his face. As for me, I am a woman; I want things, and then I don't want them. I am not made all in one piece. That man's life is necessary to my life. Oh, I beg of you, don't put on that air of virginal sincerity and good faith. I know all your intrigues. Between us two, you know as well as I that he did n't commit the crime for which he is condemned. Well, it is settled. I don't want Fabiani to die. Am I the mistress, or am I not? Come, Sir Bailiff, let us talk about something else, will you?

SIMON RENARD.

I withdraw, madame. All your nobles have spoken to you through my voice.

THE QUEEN.

What do I care for my nobles!

SIMON RENARD (*aside*).

Suppose we try the people!

[*He goes out with respectful salutation.*

THE QUEEN (*alone*).

He went out with a singular expression. That man is capable of arousing a rebellion. I must hurry off to the City Hall. What ho! Some one!

[MASTER ENEAS *and* JOSHUA *appear.*

SCENE V.

The same, without SIMON RENARD. MASTER ENEAS, JOSHUA.

THE QUEEN.

Is it you, Master Eneas? This man and you, you must attend to it that the Earl of Clanbrassil makes his escape at once.

MASTER ENEAS.

Madame —

THE QUEEN.

Very well! I won't trust you; I remember you are one of his enemies. Are there none but enemies of the man I love, around me? I will wager that this turnkey, whom I don't even know, he hates him too.

JOSHUA.

You are right, madame.

THE QUEEN.

My God! My God! This Simon Renard is more a king than I am a queen! What! not one person to trust? No one to whom I can give power to plan his escape?

JANE (*coming out from behind the pillar*).

Yes, madame, I!

JOSHUA (*aside*).

Jane!

THE QUEEN.

You! Who are you? Ah, it is you, Jane Talbot. What are you doing here? Never mind, you are here! You have come to save Fabiani; thank you! I ought to hate you, Jane; I ought to be jealous of you. I have reason enough to be! But I'm not! I love you for loving him! In front of the scaffold there is no more jealousy, — nothing but love! You are like me, you forgive him. I understand; men don't understand these things. Lady Jane, let us have it clearly understood. We are both of us miserable, are we not? We must save Fabiani! I have no one but you. I must let you do it! At least, I am sure, you will do it with all your heart. Take charge of it, gentlemen, both of you. Do everything that Lady Jane directs you to do, and upon your heads, you will be answerable for the execution of her orders. Embrace me, young woman!

JANE.

The Thames washes the base of the Tower on this side. I noticed a secret passage. A boat at that place, and the escape might be made by the Thames. It is the safest way.

MASTER ENEAS.

It will be impossible to get a boat there, before an hour.

JANE.

That is very long.

MASTER ENEAS.

It will soon pass! It will be dark, too. That will be better if her Majesty wishes to keep the escape secret.

THE QUEEN.

Perhaps you are right. In one hour then. I leave you, Lady Jane. I must go to the City Hall. Save Fabiani!

JANE.

Make yourself easy, madame!

[THE QUEEN *goes out;* JANE *follows her with her eyes.*

JOSHUA (*front of stage*).

Gilbert was right; she loves Fabiani!

SCENE VI.

The same, without THE QUEEN.

JANE (*to* MASTER ENEAS).

You have heard the Queen's commands. A boat, there, at the base of the Tower, the keys of the secret corridors, a cap, and a cloak.

MASTER ENEAS.

Impossible to get all that before night. In one hour, my lady.

JANE.

Very well! Go! Leave me with this man.

[MASTER ENEAS *goes out.* JANE *follows him with her eyes.*

JOSHUA (*aside, at front stage*).

"This man!" It is very natural. One who has forgotten Gilbert will not remember Joshua.

[*He goes to* FABIANI'S *cell and is about to open it.*

JANE.

What are you doing there?

JOSHUA.

Forestalling your wishes, my lady. I am opening this door.

JANE.

What door is that?

JOSHUA.

The door of my Lord Fabiani's cell.

JANE.

And that one?

JOSHUA.

It is the door to another man's cell.

JANE.

Who is he — that other?

JOSHUA.

Another who is condemned to death; some one whom you do not know, — a workman named Gilbert.

JANE.

Open that door!

JOSHUA (*after having opened it*).

Gilbert!

SCENE VII.

JANE, GILBERT, JOSHUA.

GILBERT (*from the interior of his cell*).

What is wanted?

[*He appears on the threshold, sees* JANE, *leans trembling against the wall.*

Jane! Lady Jane Talbot!

JANE (*on her knees, without lifting her eyes to him*).

Gilbert, I have come to save you!

GILBERT.

Save me!

JANE.

Listen to me! Pity me! Do not crush me! I know all that you would say. It is all true; but don't say it to me. I must save you. Everything is ready. The escape is safe. Let yourself be saved by me, just as if I were anybody else. I don't ask any more. You need never recognize me again. You need never know who I am! Don't forgive me! Just let me save you. Will you?

GILBERT.

Thank you! It is useless. Why wish to save my life, Lady Jane, if you do not love me?

JANE (*with joy*).

Oh, Gilbert, is that what you ask me, truly? Gilbert, do you deign to think of what is passing in this poor girl's heart? Gilbert, is it possible that the love I have for you can interest you, can seem worth thinking about?

Oh, I thought it was quite indifferent to you, — that you despised me too much to wonder what I did with my heart. Gilbert, if you only knew how these words you have spoken make me feel! Oh, it is an unhoped-for gleam of sunshine in my dark night. Oh, listen to me! If I dared to draw near to you, if I dared to touch your garments, if I dared to take your hand in mine, if I dared once more to lift my eyes to you and to Heaven, as I did once, — do you know what I would say to you? On my knees, prostrate, weeping at your feet, with sobs on my lips and the joy of angels in my heart, I would say, "Gilbert, I love you!"

GILBERT (*taking her to his heart with rapture*).

You love me?

JANE.

Yes, I love you!

GILBERT.

You love me! My God! she loves me. It is indeed true! She has said it herself; her lips have spoken it. God in heaven!

JANE.

My Gilbert!

GILBERT.

You say all is prepared for my escape? Quick — let us hurry! Life! I want to live! Jane loves me! This roof descends on my head and crushes it. I want air! I suffocate here! Let us fly quickly. Let us go, Jane! I want to live! I want to live! I am beloved.

JANE.

Not yet. We must have a boat. We must wait until night. But be easy. You are saved. In less than an hour we will be outside. The Queen is at the City Hall and will not come back so soon as that. I am mistress here. I will explain it all to you.

GILBERT.

Wait an hour? That is long. Oh, I yearn to get back to life and happiness. Jane, Jane, you are there; I will live! You love me! I am come back from hell! Restrain me. I will do something mad. I will laugh, I will sing. Ah, you do love me then?

JANE.

Yes, I love you! yes, I love you! And listen, Gilbert, believe me; this is the truth as though I were on my death-bed: I have never loved any one but you. Even in my fall, even in the midst of my sin, I loved you. Scarcely had I fallen into the arms of that demon who ruined me, when I wept for my angel.

GILBERT.

Forgotten! forgiven! Never speak of it again, Jane! What do I care for the past? Who could resist your voice, who would do other than I am doing? Yes, I pardon everything, my well-beloved child. The foundation of love is mercy and pardon, Jane; jealousy and despair burned the tears in my eyes, but I pardon you, but I thank you! You are the only truly bright thing in this world; at each word that you speak, I feel grief dies, and joy is born in my soul. Jane, lift your head, stand up straight before me there and look at me! I tell you that you are my child.

JANE.

Always generous! Gilbert, my well-beloved.

GILBERT.

I wish I were outside now: in our flight, far away: free, with you! Oh, this night, which will never come!

The boat is not there. Jane, we will leave London at once, this night. We will leave England; we will go to Venice. Men of my trade make a great deal of money there. You will belong to me! Oh, my God! I am insane! I have forgotten the name you bear. It is too proud an one, Jane.

JANE.

What do you mean?

GILBERT.

Daughter of Lord Talbot.

JANE.

I know one prouder still.

GILBERT.

Which?

JANE.

Wife of the workman Gilbert.

GILBERT.

Jane!

JANE.

Oh, no! Don't think I ask so much as that. I know I am unworthy of that. I do not lift my eyes so high. I would never take such an advantage of your pardon. The poor engraver Gilbert shall make no mésalliance with the Countess of Waterford. No, I will follow you, I will love you, I will never leave you; I will lie all day at your feet, all night at your door. I will watch you work, I will help you, I will give you all you need. I will be to you something less than a sister, something more than a dog. And if you ever marry, Gilbert, — because God will want you to find somebody, some pure woman, without stain and worthy of you — well, if you marry, and if your wife is good, if she will let me, I will

be your wife's servant. If she wont have me, I will go off, far off, to die where I can. That is the only way I shall ever leave you. If you do not marry I will stay with you, always; I will be gentle and patient, — oh, you shall see! — and if people think ill of me because I am with you, — well, they can think what they please. I have no longer the right to blush, you see, — I am only an unfortunate woman!

GILBERT (*falling at her feet*).

You are an angel! You are my wife!

JANE.

Your wife? Ah, you are like God, — your pardon purifies me. Be blessed, Gilbert, for putting this crown upon my brow.

[GILBERT *takes her up and folds her to his heart. While they stand thus in each other's arms,* JOSHUA *takes* JANE'S *hand.*

JOSHUA.

It is Joshua, Lady Jane!

JANE.

Good Joshua!

JOSHUA.

You did not know me a little while ago.

JANE.

No, I had to begin with him.

[JOSHUA *kisses her hand.*

GILBERT (*pressing her in his arms*).

Ah, what happiness! But is it real, all this happiness?

[*For some time a distant noise has been heard; confused voices, a tumult. It grows dark.*

JOSHUA.

What is that noise?

[*He goes to the window which overlooks the street.*

JANE.

Oh! My God! Let nothing happen!

JOSHUA.

There is a great crowd off there. Pick-axes, pikes, torches. The Queen's pensioners on horseback, and fighting. They are all coming this way! What cries! The devil! It looks like a public revolt.

JANE.

If it is only not against Gilbert.

DISTANT CRIES.

Fabiani! Death to Fabiani!

JANE.

Can you hear?

JOSHUA.

Yes.

JANE.

What are they saying?

JOSHUA.

I can't distinguish!

JANE.

Oh, my God! My God!

[MASTER ENEAS *and a boatman enter hastily through the concealed door.*

SCENE VIII.

The same. MASTER ENEAS, *a Boatman.*

MASTER ENEAS.

My Lord Fabiani! My lord, not an instant to lose! The people know the Queen wanted to save your life. There is a revolt of the London populace against you. In a quarter of an hour, you will be torn to pieces. My lord, save yourself. Here is a cloak and a cap. Here are the keys. Here is a boatman. Don't forget that you owe it all to me. My lord, make haste! [*Low to Boatman.*] Remember, you are not to hurry.

JANE (*hastily covers* GILBERT *with the cloak and cap; low to* JOSHUA).

Heaven! If this man will only not recognize him.

MASTER ENEAS (*looking into* GILBERT'S *face*).

What! this is not Lord Clanbrassil. You are not fulfilling the Queen's orders, my lady. You are helping another to escape.

JANE.

All is lost! I ought to have foreseen this! Ah, sir, it is true! Have mercy —

MASTER ENEAS (*low to* JANE).

Silence! Go on! I have said nothing! I have seen nothing!

[*He goes up stage with an air of indifference.*

JANE.

What does he say? Ah, Providence befriends us. Everybody wants to save Gilbert.

JOSHUA.

No, my lady, everybody wants to destroy Fabiani.
[*During the entire scene the cries have increased outside.*

JANE.

We must hurry, Gilbert. Come quickly.

JOSHUA.

Let him go alone!

JANE.

Leave him!

JOSHUA.

Only for a moment. No woman in the boat, if you want it to arrive safe. It is too light yet; your dress is white. After the peril is over, you will find each other again. Come this way with me. Let him go that way.

JANE.

Joshua is right. Where will I find you, my Gilbert?

GILBERT.

Under the first arch of London Bridge.

JANE.

Good! Go quickly. The tumult increases. Oh, I wish you were safe away!

JOSHUA.

Here are the keys. There are twelve doors to open and shut between here and the water's edge. It will take you a good quarter of an hour.

JANE.

A quarter of an hour! Twelve doors! That is frightful.

GILBERT (*embracing her*).

Good-bye, Jane! A few more moments of separation and we will rejoin each other for a life-time!

JANE.

For eternity. [*To the Boatman.*] Sir, I place him in your care!

MASTER ENEAS (*low to Boatman*).

For fear of accident, don't hurry.

[GILBERT *goes out with Boatman.*

JOSHUA.

He is saved! Now for us! We must shut this cell.

[*He shuts the door of* GILBERT'S *cell.*

All right! Come quickly; this way!

[*He goes out, with* JANE, *through the other concealed door.*

MASTER ENEAS (*alone*).

Fabiani remains in the trap. Now, there is a shrewd little woman whom Simon Renard would have paid a good deal for. How will the Queen take all this? Provided the consequences do not fall on my shoulders!

[THE QUEEN *and* SIMON RENARD *enter with rapid steps. The tumult outside has steadily increased. It is night. Cries of death, torches, lights, sounds of moving masses; the click of arms, shots, the stamping of horses. Several noblemen with daggers in their hands accompany* THE QUEEN. *Among them are the herald of England, Clarence, bearing the royal banner, and the herald of the Order of the Garter, Jarretiere, bearing the banner of that order.*

SCENE IX.

THE QUEEN, SIMON RENARD, MASTER ENEAS, LORD CLINTON, *the two heralds, lords, pages, etc.*

THE QUEEN (*low to* MASTER ENEAS).

Has Fabiani escaped?

MASTER ENEAS.

Not yet!

THE QUEEN.

Not yet! [*Giving him a terrible look.*

MASTER ENEAS (*aside*).

The devil!

THE PEOPLE (*outside*).

Death to Fabiani!

SIMON RENARD.

You must make your decision on the spot, madame. The people demand this man's death! The Tower is besieged. The revolt is formidable. Your nobles have been cut to pieces on London Bridge. Your Majesty's pensioners hold their own yet; but, just the same, your Majesty has been chased street by street, from the City Hall to the Tower of London. Madame Elizabeth's followers have joined the people. You can tell that by the venom of the mob. All this is serious. What does your Majesty command?

THE PEOPLE.

Fabiani! Death to Fabiani!

[*They grow louder, and come nearer.*

THE QUEEN.

Death to Fabiani! Do you hear that howling populace, my lords? You must throw a man out to them. The rabble is hungry!

SIMON RENARD.

What does your Majesty command?

THE QUEEN.

By heaven, my lords! it seems to me you all stand trembling around me! Upon my soul! must a woman show you your duty as noblemen? To horse, my lords, to horse! Are you afraid of the rabble? Are swords afraid of clubs?

SIMON RENARD.

Don't let things go any farther. Yield, madame, while there is yet time. You can yet say "the rabble;" in an hour you will have to say "the people!"

[*The cries increase, the noise comes nearer.*

THE QUEEN.

In an hour!

SIMON RENARD (*going to gallery and returning*).

In a quarter of an hour, madame. The first wall of the Tower is broken down. One more step, the mob will be here.

THE PEOPLE.

To the Tower! to the Tower! Fabiani! death to Fabiani!

THE QUEEN.

How right they are who call the people terrible! Fabiano!

SIMON RENARD.

Do you want to see him torn to pieces before your eyes?

THE QUEEN.

Do you know this is infamous, that not one of you stirs? In the name of Heaven, defend me, my lords!

LORD CLINTON.

You? yes, madame. Fabiano? no!

THE QUEEN.

Very well, I will tell you all then, so much the worse for you. Fabiano is innocent. Fabiano never committed the crime for which he was condemned. It was I, and this man here, and the engraver Gilbert. We did it all; we invented it all; we imagined it all. It was all a farce! Contradict me if you dare, Sir Bailiff! Now, gentlemen, will you defend him? He is innocent; I swear it. On my head, on my crown, on my God, on my mother's soul, he is innocent of the crime. It is as true as that you stand there, Lord Clinton! Defend him! Annihilate these wretches as you annihilated Tom Wyatt, my brave Clinton, my old friend, my good Robert! I swear to you that it is false that Fabiano tried to assassinate the Queen.

LORD CLINTON.

There is another Queen whom he tried to assassinate,—England! [*The cries continue outside.*

THE QUEEN.

The balcony! Open the balcony. I myself will prove to the people that he is not guilty.

SIMON RENARD.

Prove to the people that he is not Italian.

THE QUEEN.

When I think it is Simon Renard, one of Cardinal Granvelle's creatures, who dares to speak to me like this! Well, open that door! open that cell! Fabiano is there. I want to see him; I want to speak to him.

SIMON RENARD (*low*).

What are you doing? For his own sake, you need n't let everybody know where he is.

THE PEOPLE.

Death to Fabiani! Long live Elizabeth!

SIMON RENARD.

They cry long live Elizabeth, now!

THE QUEEN.

My God! My God!

SIMON RENARD.

Choose, madame [*with one hand he points to the cell*], this head to the people [*with the other hand he designates the crown which* THE QUEEN *wears*] or that crown to Madame Elizabeth.

THE PEOPLE.

Death! Death! Fabiani! Elizabeth!

[*A stone breaks through a pane of glass near* THE QUEEN.

SIMON RENARD.

Your Majesty is destroying herself without saving him! The second court is reached. What does the Queen command?

THE QUEEN.

You are all cowards, and Clinton is the worst of all. Ah, Clinton, I will remember this, my friend!

SIMON RENARD.

What does the Queen command?

THE QUEEN.

Oh, to be abandoned by all of you! to have confessed all without obtaining anything! What sort of creatures are these noblemen here? That populace is infamous! I would like to crush them under my feet. There are times then, when a queen is nothing but a woman? You will pay dear for this, gentlemen!

SIMON RENARD.

What does the Queen command?

THE QUEEN (*crushed*).

Whatever you will. Do what you like. You are an assassin. [*Aside.*] Oh, Fabiano!

SIMON RENARD.

Clarence! Jarretiere! Come here! Master Eneas, open the great balcony of the gallery.

[*The balcony in the back opens.* SIMON RENARD *steps out upon it,* CLARENCE *at his right,* JARRETIERE *at his left. Immense tumult outside.*

THE PEOPLE.

Fabiani! Fabiani!

SIMON RENARD (*on the balcony, turned toward the people*).

In the Queen's name!

HERALDS.

In the Queen's name! [*Profound silence outside.*

SIMON RENARD.

People, the Queen bids you know this: To-day, this very night, one hour after the curfew, Fabiano Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil, covered with a black veil from head to foot, bound with an iron gag, a yellow wax candle weighing three pounds in his hand, will be led, by torch-light, from the Tower of London, through Charing Cross, to the old Market-Place of the city, there to be publicly punished and beheaded, for the crimes of high treason and attempt of regicide on the imperial person of the Queen! [*Immense applause outside.*

THE PEOPLE.

Long live the Queen! Death to Fabiani!

SIMON RENARD (*continuing*).

And, in order that no one in this city of London shall ignore it, this is what the Queen orders during the entire journey, which the criminal must make from the Tower of London to the old Market-Place: The great bell of the Tower shall toll; at the moment of the execution, three cannon-shots will be fired, — the first, when he mounts the scaffold; the second, when he kneels upon the black cloth; the third, when his head falls. [*Applause.*]

THE PEOPLE.

Illuminate! Illuminate!

SIMON RENARD.

This night the Tower and the city of London will be illuminated with lights and torches, in sign of joy. I have spoken. [*Applause.*] God protect the old charter of England!

THE TWO HERALDS.

God protect the old charter of England.

THE PEOPLE.

Death to Fabiani! Long live Mary! Long live the Queen!

[*The balcony is closed.* SIMON RENARD *approaches* THE QUEEN.

SIMON RENARD.

What I have just done will never be forgiven me by the Princess Elizabeth!

THE QUEEN.

Nor by Queen Mary. Leave me, sir.

[*She dismisses them all with a gesture.*

SIMON RENARD (*low to* MASTER ENEAS).

Master Eneas, look to the execution!

MASTER ENEAS.

Count upon me!

[SIMON RENARD *goes out. As* MASTER ENEAS *is about to go,* THE QUEEN *rushes to him, seizes him by the arm and drags him violently to the front of the stage.*

SCENE X.

THE QUEEN, MASTER ENEAS.

THE PEOPLE (*outside*).

Death to Fabiani! Fabiani! Fabiani!

THE QUEEN.

Whose head is worth most at this moment, do you think,—Fabiani's or yours?

MASTER ENEAS.

Madame!

THE QUEEN.

You are a traitor!

MASTER ENEAS.

Madame! [*Aside.*] The devil!

THE QUEEN.

No explanations! I swear by my mother, if Fabiano dies, you die!

MASTER ENEAS.

But, madame —

THE QUEEN.

Save Fabiano, and you save yourself, — not otherwise!

THE PEOPLE.

Death to Fabiani! Fabiani!

MASTER ENEAS.

Save the Earl of Clanbrassil? But the people are out there! It is impossible! By what means?

THE QUEEN.

Find some!

MASTER ENEAS.

What could I do?

THE QUEEN.

Do what you would for yourself.

MASTER ENEAS.

The people will keep armed until after the execution. To satisfy them, somebody must be beheaded!

THE QUEEN.

Anybody you please.

MASTER ENEAS.

Anybody I please? Wait, madame! The execution will be at night, by torchlight; the criminal covered with a black veil, gagged; the people kept a long way from the scaffold by the pike-men, the same as always. It is enough, if the people see a head fall. The thing is possible. If only the boatman is there yet! I told him not to hurry.

[*He goes to the window which overlooks the Thames.*

There he is, but we 're just in time!

[*He leans out of the window, a torch in his hand, waving his handkerchief, then he turns to* THE QUEEN.

All right! I will answer for Lord Fabiani, madame!

THE QUEEN.

On your head?

MASTER ENEAS.

On my head!

THIRD DAY. —Part II.

Scene. — *A hall or room into which lead two staircases, one ascending and the other descending. The entrance to each of these staircases fills a portion of the back of the stage. The one which ascends ends at the frieze; the one which descends ends underneath, — neither the beginning nor the end is visible.*

The room is draped with black in a peculiar fashion. The wall on the right, the wall on the left, and the ceiling are covered with a black cloth on which is a large white cross; the background, which faces the spectator, with a white cloth and large black cross. These black and white draperies continue until they are lost to sight under the staircases. To the right and to the left, there is an altar draped with black and white, decorated as if for a funeral. Tall candles. No priests. A few funeral lamps hanging here and there from the vaulted roof, light the room and the staircases feebly. What really lights the room is the great white cloth in the background, through which a reddish light shines as if there were a fiery furnace behind. The room is paved with tomb-stones. As the curtain rises, the motionless figure of The Queen *is seen in black outline on this transparent cloth.*

SCENE I.

Jane, Joshua. *They enter cautiously through a little door behind the black draperies, which they push aside.*

JANE.

Where are we, Joshua?

JOSHUA.

On the great landing of the staircase down which the criminals go to execution. It was draped in this way under Henry VIII.

JANE.

No way of getting out of the Tower?

JOSHUA.

The people are on guard at every exit. They want to be sure of getting their criminal this time. No one can go out before the execution.

JANE.

The proclamation they made from the balcony rings in my ears yet. This is a horrible thing, Joshua.

JOSHUA.

Oh, I've seen many such!

JANE.

If only Gilbert has been able to escape. Do you think he is safe, Joshua?

JOSHUA.

I am sure of it.

JANE.

You are sure of it, good Joshua?

JOSHUA.

The Tower was n't surrounded on the water-side. Then, when he started, the riot was n't as bad as it was afterward. It was a fine riot, if you but knew it.

JANE.

You are sure that he is safe?

JOSHUA.

And waiting for you under the first arch of London Bridge, where you will meet him before midnight.

JANE.

Heaven! He will be anxious too.

[*Seeing the shadow of* THE QUEEN.

My God! what is that, Joshua?

JOSHUA (*low, taking her hand*).

Silence! It is the lioness, on the watch.

[*While* JANE *looks at this figure in horror, a distant voice, which seems to come from above, pronounces these words slowly and distinctly.*

VOICE.

The man, covered with a black veil, who follows me, is the very high and mighty Lord Fabiano Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil, Baron of Dinasmonddy, Baron of Darmouth in Devonshire, who is to be beheaded at the London Market-Place, for the crimes of regicide and high treason. God have mercy on his soul!

ANOTHER VOICE.

Pray for him!

JANE (*trembling*).

Joshua, do you hear?

JOSHUA.

Yes, I hear such things every day.

[*A funeral procession appears at the head of the staircase, and gradually forms itself on the steps as it descends. A man dressed in black is at the head, bearing a white banner with black cross. Next comes* MASTER ENEAS DULVERTON, *wearing a great black cloak, holding his Constable's baton in his hand. Then a group of halberdiers, dressed in red; then a man in white, bearing black banner with white cross. To the right and to the left, halberdiers bearing torches.*

JANE.

Do you see?

JOSHUA.

Yes, I see such things every day.

[*As they are about to reach the stage the procession stops.*

MASTER ENEAS.

The man, covered with a black veil, who follows me, is the very high and mighty Lord Fabiano Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil, Baron of Dinasmonddy, Baron of Darmouth in Devonshire, who is to be beheaded at the London Market-Place, for the crimes of regicide and high treason. God have mercy on his soul!

THE TWO STANDARD-BEARERS.

Pray for him!

[*The procession slowly crosses the back of the stage.*

JANE.

This is a terrible thing we are looking at, Joshua. It freezes my blood.

JOSHUA.

That abominable Fabiani!

JANE.

Peace, Joshua! Very abominable, but very unfortunate.

[*The procession reaches the other staircase:* SIMON RENARD, *who appeared at the entrance of this staircase, some moments before, and has observed everything, moves aside to let them pass. The procession goes under the arch of the staircase, and gradually disappears.* JANE, *terrified, follows it with her eyes.*

SIMON RENARD (*after the procession has disappeared*).

What does this mean? Is that really Fabiani? I thought him not so tall. Has Master Eneas? — It seems to me the Queen kept him near her for a moment. Let us see!

[*He disappears under the staircase, following the procession.*

VOICE (*which grows fainter and fainter*).

The man, covered with a black veil, who follows me, is the very high and mighty Lord Fabiano Fabiani, Earl of Clanbrassil, Baron of Dinasmonddy, Baron of Darmouth in Devonshire, who is to be beheaded at the London Market-Place, for the crimes of regicide and high treason.

OTHER VOICES (*almost indistinct*).

Pray for him!

JOSHUA.

The great bell will announce his exit from the Tower, presently. Perhaps you can make your escape now: I must try to find a way. Wait for me here: I will come back.

JANE.

Are you going to leave me, Joshua? I will be afraid here, all alone.

JOSHUA.

It will be dangerous for you to wander over the Tower with me. I must get you away from here. Remember Gilbert is waiting for you.

JANE.

Gilbert! Everything for Gilbert. Go!

[JOSHUA *goes out.*

Oh, what a terrible sight! — when I think that it might have been like this for Gilbert.

[*She kneels on one of the altar steps.*

Oh, thank you! You are indeed God the Saviour. You have saved Gilbert.

[*The cloth at the back opens.* THE QUEEN *appears: she comes slowly to the front of the stage, without seeing* JANE, *who turns around.*

The Queen! My God!

SCENE II.

JANE, THE QUEEN. JANE *clings to the altar, with horror, and fixes a look of stupor and terror on* THE QUEEN'S *face.*

THE QUEEN (*she stands a few seconds at the front of the stage, her glance fixed, pale, as if absorbed in gloomy thoughts. At last she sighs profoundly*).

Oh, the people!

[*She looks around with anxiety and sees* JANE.

Some one is here. Oh, it is you, young woman! It is you, Lady Jane. I frighten you. Don't be afraid. You know the turnkey Eneas betrayed us. Don't be afraid. I have already told you, child, you have nothing to fear from me. What was your ruin a month ago is your salvation to-day. You love Fabiano. There are only you and I in the whole world to-day who have a heart like that. Only you and I love him. We are sisters.

JANE.

Madame —

THE QUEEN.

Yes, you and I, — two women, we are all he has! Every one else is against him; a whole city, a whole nation, a whole world. Unequal struggle of love against hate. Love for Fabiano is a sad thing, a fatal, a horror-

stricken thing: it has a pallid brow like yours, tear-filled eyes like mine; it hides itself close to a funereal altar; it entreats with your lips, it curses with mine. But hate for Fabiano is a proud thing, radiant, triumphant: it is well-armed and victorious; it has the Court, the people, the crowded streets; it munches cries of death and cries of joy at the same time; it is magnificent, haughty, powerful; it illuminates a whole city surrounding a scaffold. Love, here it is,— two women, weeping in a tomb! Hate, there it is!

[*She pulls the white cloth violently aside, which reveals a balcony, and beyond the balcony, almost out of sight, the whole city of London, brilliantly illuminated. What is visible of the Tower of London is also illuminated.* JANE *fixes her amazed eyes on this startling scene, the reflection of which lights up the theatre.*

THE QUEEN.

Oh, infamous city; rebellious city; accursed city; monstrous city, — who soaks her holiday dress in blood, and who holds the torch for the executioner! You are afraid of it, are n't you, Jane? Does n't it seem to you, as it does to me, that it cowardly defies us both; that it is watching us with its hundred thousand flaming eyes — us, feeble, forsaken women that we are, alone and lost in this sepulchre? Jane, do you hear it howl and laugh,— that horrible city? Oh, England, all England to him who will destroy London! Would that I could change those torches into fiery brands, those lights into flames, and that illuminated city into a city of *fire!*

[*A tremendous outburst from the people outside, — applause, confused cries, "There he is! There he is! Death to* FABIANI —" *The great bell of the Tower begins to toll. At this sound,* THE QUEEN *breaks into a terrible peal of laughter.*

JANE.

God! The unfortunate man is leaving the Tower — You laugh, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Yes, I laugh! [*She laughs.*] Yes, and you will laugh, too. Let me drop those hangings first. It seems to me all the time as if we were not alone, as if that frightful city could see and hear us.

[*She drops the white curtain and comes back to* JANE.

Now that he is gone, now that there is no more danger, I can tell you about it. Laugh, laugh, let us both laugh at those execrable people who drink blood! Oh, it is grand, Jane! Jane, you tremble for Fabiano? Be at ease, laugh with me, I tell you. Jane, the man they 've got, the man who is going to die, the man they think is Fabiano — is not Fabiano. [*She laughs.*]

JANE.

Not Fabiano?

THE QUEEN.

No!

JANE.

Then who is it?

THE QUEEN.

The other!

JANE.

What other?

THE QUEEN.

You know well enough! You know him, — that workman, — that man. Besides, what does it matter?

JANE (*trembling with horror*).

Gilbert?

THE QUEEN.

Yes, Gilbert! That is the name.

JANE.

Madame! Oh no, madame! Don't say that, madame! Gilbert, — it would be too horrible! He has escaped!

THE QUEEN.

He was escaping when they seized him. They put him under the black veil in Fabiano's place. It is night. The people won't know. Rest easy.

JANE (*with a frightful cry*).

Ah, madame! But the man I love — it is Gilbert!

THE QUEEN.

What? What do you say? Are you going crazy? Did you deceive me, too? Ah, it is Gilbert whom you love! Well, what does that matter to me?

JANE (*at* THE QUEEN'S *feet, broken-hearted, sobbing, dragging herself on her knees, her hands clasped: the great bell tolls through all this scene*).

Madame — just for pity! Madame, in the name of Heaven! Madame, by your crown, by your mother, by the angels! Gilbert, Gilbert, — it will make me mad! Madame, save Gilbert! That man, he is my life; that man, he is my husband; that man — I have told you that he did everything for me, that he brought me up, that he adopted me, that beside my cradle he took the place of my father, who died for your father. Madame, you see that I am a poor, wretched creature, and it is n't right to be too hard on me. What you said to me just now struck such a terrible blow that I don't truly see how it is I have strength to speak to you. I am just saying what I can, you see. But you must stop the execution, — right away! Stop the execution! Put it

off until to-morrow. Just time to have things understood, that is all. The people can wait until to-morrow, I know. We will see what we can do. No! don't shake your head! There is no danger for your Fabiano. You can put me in his place — under the black veil — at night. Who will know? But you must save Gilbert. What difference does it make whether it be he or I? And since — since I want to die! Oh, my God, that bell, that frightful bell! Every knell of that bell is a step toward the scaffold. Every knell of that bell strikes me full in the heart. Do it, madame. Be merciful! No danger for your Fabiano! Let me kiss your hands. I love you, madame. I never said it before — but I love you dearly. You are a great queen. See, how I kiss your beautiful hands! Give an order to stop the execution. There is time yet. I am sure we can do it. They go so slowly. It is a long way from the Tower to the old Market-Place. The man on the balcony said they would pass through Charing Cross. There is a quicker way. A man on horseback could get there. In Heaven's name, madame, be merciful! Try to put yourself in my place. Imagine that I am Queen and you the poor young woman; and you would weep as I do, and I would pardon. Pardon! Pardon! Oh, that is what I was afraid of, that my tears would hinder me from speaking! Oh, right away! — stop the execution! There won't be any trouble, madame; no danger for Fabiano, I swear it to you. Don't you really think you ought to do what I say, madame?

THE QUEEN (*touched and lifting her up*).

I wish I could, poor girl. Ah, yes, you are weeping as I wept; what you feel I have just felt myself, and my anguish makes me understand yours. Look! I am weeping too. It is very sad, my poor child. It seems

to me, too, they might have taken somebody else, — Tyrconnel, for instance. But he is too well known: they had to have some obscure man. He was the only one they could get hold of. I explain all this so that you can understand, don't you see? My God, there are fatalities like that: we get caught. We can't do anything.

JANE.

I am listening to you, madame. I am like you. I have got many things to say. But I would like to have the order to suspend the execution signed, and the man sent off. You see it would be finished then. We could talk better afterwards. Oh, that bell! forever, that bell!

THE QUEEN.

What you want is impossible, Lady Jane.

JANE.

Oh, no, it is possible! — a man on horseback. There is a very short way, — by the wharf. I can go — I — It is quite possible! It is easy! You see I talk very quietly.

THE QUEEN.

But the people won't have it. They will come back here and massacre everybody in the Tower. And Fabiano is here yet. Can't you understand? You are trembling, poor child. I am like you, — I tremble also. In your turn, put yourself in my place. I might easily not take the trouble to explain all this to you. You see I do what I can. Don't think about this Gilbert any more. Jane, it is over — Resign yourself.

JANE.

Over! No, it is not over! No, — as long as that horrible bell tolls, it is not over! Resign myself to

Gilbert's death? Do you think I am going to let Gilbert die like that? No, madame! Ah, I am wasting my time! Ah, you won't listen to me! Very well, if the Queen won't hear me, the people will. They are good, the people, — if you but knew it! They are in the court yet. You can do what you like with me afterwards. I am going to tell them they are cheated; and that it is not Fabiani, it's a poor workman, named Gilbert, — a workman like themselves!

THE QUEEN.

Stop, you wretched child!

[*She seizes her arm and looks at her fixedly and resentfully.*

This is the way you thank me, is it? I am patient and gentle with you, I weep with you — and all at once, you get wild and furious! Well, my love is just as great as your's, and my hand is more powerful! You shall not stir! Your lover! — what do I care for your lover? Are all the girls in England coming to ask me about their lovers, now? By my soul, I save my own as well as I can, and at the cost of everything which stands in his way. You must look after your's.

JANE.

Let me go! Oh, I curse you, you wretched, wicked woman!

THE QUEEN.

Hush!

JANE.

I will not hush! Do you want me to tell you what I 'm thinking of now? I don't believe the man who is going to die out there is my Gilbert.

THE QUEEN.

What are you saying?

JANE.

I don't know, but I saw him pass by under that black veil; and if it had been my Gilbert, something would have stirred in me, something would have roused itself in my heart, and would have cried out to me, "Gilbert — it is Gilbert." But I felt nothing at all; it is not Gilbert.

THE QUEEN.

What are you saying? Ah, my God! you are crazy. What you have said is idiotic, but it terrifies me just the same. Ah, you have roused one of the secret terrors of my own heart! Why did that riot prevent me from looking after him myself? Why did I entrust to any one but myself the safety of my Fabiano? Eneas Dulverton is a traitor. Perhaps Simon Renard was there. What if I have been betrayed a second time by Fabiano's enemies? What if it is Fabiano himself? What, ho! quick — some one — come — some one!

[*Two Jailers appear.*

[*To the first.*] You — run! Here is my royal signet. Tell them to suspend the execution. To the old Market-Place; to the old Market-Place! There is a shorter way, you said, Jane.

JANE.

By the wharf.

THE QUEEN (*to Jailer*).

By the wharf. A horse — go quick!

[*The Jailer goes out.*

[*To second Jailer.*] You — go at once to Edward the Confessor's Tower. The two cells of the condemned criminals are there. There is a man in one of them. Bring him here at once. [*The Jailer goes out.*

I tremble; my knees sink under me; I have not strength enough to go myself. Ah, you have made me

as mad as yourself! Miserable girl, you have made me as wretched as yourself. I curse you as you cursed me. My God, will the man get there in time? What a torturing anxiety! I can't see anything more. All is trouble in my soul. Does the bell toll yet? Is it for Gilbert? Is it for Fabiano?

JANE.

The bell ceases.

THE QUEEN.

Then the procession is on the place for the execution. Will the man get there in time?

[*A cannon-shot is heard.*

JANE.

Heaven!

THE QUEEN.

He is ascending the scaffold! [*Second cannon.*
He is kneeling!

JANE.

It is horrible! [*Third cannon.*

BOTH.

Ah!

THE QUEEN.

There is only one alive now. In a moment we will know which one. My God, let the man who comes in be Fabiano!

JANE.

My God, let it be Gilbert!

[*The curtain at the back opens.* SIMON RENARD *appears, holding* GILBERT *by the hand.*

Gilbert!

[*They rush into each other's arms.*

THE QUEEN.

And Fabiano?

SIMON RENARD.

Dead.

THE QUEEN.

Dead! Dead! Who has dared —

SIMON RENARD.

I have dared. I have saved the Queen of England.

THE END.

RUY BLAS.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Ruy Blas, by Victor Hugo, is unquestionably one of the finest of modern French dramas, both as regards its construction, the noble vein of true poetry that pervades it, and its powerful development of character.

What can be more admirable than the inimitable Don Cæsar de Bazan, — the eccentric ragamuffin, the irrepressible ne'er-do-weel, equal to cut a purse or to perpetrate any extravagance, and who, at the same time, would sooner die than commit a base action, — who literally, in the end, sacrifices himself in his efforts to discover a nefarious plot his own relative is preparing wherewith to entrap the Queen? This creation alone is sufficient to stamp the play with the seal of excellence; but Don Cæsar de Bazan is not the only character that calls for special notice.

In Don Sallust we have the cold, calculating, and unscrupulous politician, — a man who, to serve his own purposes, hesitates not, for one moment, to carry out his intentions, even though they involve him in the perpetration of actual crime. This character, although terrible, is not unduly strained or overdrawn, as more than one example has proved to the world. It is not only an art study, depraved though it is, but also one of nature.

In Ruy Blas we have one of those chivalrous natures, who, full of enthusiasm for all that is great and good, are yet led to commit errors in spite of themselves, by a more subtle and powerful will than their own.

In Donna Maria de Neubourg we have the suffering and neglected woman, who, from untoward circumstances, is led into a snare that proves, in the end, her downfall. From the first she enlists our sympathy; and finally awakens our pity, because, in yielding to a natural impulse in her trying and cruel position, her misfortunes fall upon her undeserved.

Don Guritan, although a mere sketch, is a most amusing and distinctive character. In him we have the vain-glorious martinet and fop, who brings upon his own head the punishment of his egregious vanity and folly.

I have endeavoured to make this translation as nearly literal as the idiomatic construction of the two languages will permit. There are some words, and indeed phrases, that are untranslatable; and, where these occur, which is comparatively seldom, I have *imitated* them as nearly as possible, so as not to injure the distinctive character of the work. There are also passages that read well, and even finely in the French language, which, were they literally translated, would be apt to raise a smile where no such effect was intended; take, for example, the concluding lines of the great speech made by Ruy Blas to the Ministers in the third act. He says: —

> "Et l'aigle imperial, qui, jadis, sous ta loi
> Couvrait le monde entier de tonnerre et de flamme
> *Cuit, pauvre oiseau plumé, dans leur marmite infame!*"

Now, as "marmite" is literally a pot or caldron, the idea of a plucked eagle being boiled therein is too ludicrous. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of slightly altering the original, without, I trust, robbing the grand climax of its power.

In conclusion, I will only add that I have adopted the twelve syllable metre of rhyming verse, because it is the nearest approach possible to the great original, and carries

out the design I had from the first, namely: to render into English the *form*, as well as, if possible, the *spirit* of the great French drama. If I have succeeded, therefore, in part only, I shall be amply compensated; and should this work find favour with the reading public, and awaken a still deeper interest than already exists in the poetical dramas of this great Author, my labour will not have been in vain.

W. D. S. A.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Ruy Blas.
Don Sallust de Bazan.
Don Cæsar de Bazan.
Don Guritan.
The Marquis de Santa Cruz.
The Marquis Del Basto.
The Count of Alba.
The Count of Camporeal
The Marquis de Priego
Don Manuel Arias
Montazgo
Don Antonio Ubilla
Covadenga
} *Privy Councillors*
Gudiel.
A Lackey.
An Alcalde.
A Huissier.
An Alguazil.
Donna Maria de Neubourg, *Queen of Spain.*
Duchess of Albuquerque, *Camerera Mayor.*
Casilda.
A Duenna.
A Page.

Ladies, Lords, Privy Councillors, Pages, Duennas, Alguazils, Guards. Huissiers of the Chamber and the Court.

MADRID, 169—.

RUY BLAS.

ACT I.

DON SALLUST.

SCENE. — *A grand saloon in the King's palace at Madrid, splendidly furnished in the half-German style of the time of Philip IV. On the left is a large window, with gilded frame and small panes of glass. On either side of the stage, in recesses, are small doors leading into the interior apartments. At the back is a large gilded glass partition, in the centre of which are great doors, also glazed, opening on to a gallery which runs the whole width of the stage. This is masked by immense curtains that reach from the top to the bottom of the glass partition. A table, a fauteuil, and writing materials on the table. It is early morning.*

DON SALLUST *enters by the small door on the left, followed by* RUY BLAS *and* GUDIEL, *who carries a kind of wallet, and sundry packages made up as though for a long journey.* DON SALLUST *is dressed in a black velvet costume, of the time of Charles II., with the collar of the Golden Fleece round his neck. He also wears a lighter coloured velvet cloak over his costume, embroidered with gold, and turned up with black satin. Sword and hat, with plume of white feathers.* GUDIEL *is in black, with a sword by his side.* RUY BLAS *is in livery: a tight-fitting, brown doublet; surtout, laced with red and gold; bare-headed, and no sword.*

SCENE I.

DON SALLUST, GUDIEL, *and at intervals* RUY BLAS.

DON SALLUST.

Pull the door to, Ruy Blas. Sleep still seals up their eyes.
Open the window there. The sun, ere long, will rise.

[RUY BLAS *does as he is directed, and then, on a sign from* SALLUST, *goes out by the door at the back.* DON SALLUST *turns suddenly from the window, out of which he has been looking, to* GUDIEL.

Yes, 't is a thunder-clap! My reign has passed away,
Gudiel. Disgraced — sent forth — all lost in one short day!
The fact is secret yet; but speak not. At my age
Such thoughtless fool's-intrigues should scarce my time engage.
That e'er a wretched servant — one from nothing sprung —
Should dare to raise against me her too fluent tongue
Crying seduction! — mighty crime! Because she came
From Neubourg with the Queen, on me falls extra blame,
Forsooth. The sobbing creature needs must drag her child
Through the King's private chamber — shriek in accents wild
For justice! I am ordered to espouse her: I
Refuse; and exile — exile is my doom! Ah, why
For twenty years did I thus labour night and day
If at one single stroke the whole is cast away!
Why build me up a name that all pronounce with fear —
Yea, even those who breathe this courtly atmosphere.
Head of the house of Bazan; 't is a name of pride,
Which even the most noble never durst deride;
Yet *now* it fain must go — aye, honours — credit — all!
Then the crowd's mocking laughter will ring o'er my fall!

GUDIEL.

My lord, none know yet of it! —

DON SALLUST.

True: so far so well;
But then to-morrow must its tale of scandal tell.
By Heaven! I will not fall, — I 'll simply disappear.
[*Unbuttons his doublet with violence.*

This doublet chokes me! —'T is your work. There, now
I'm freer.
You button me as if I were some strait-laced priest!
[*Throws himself into a chair.*
But now to work! — to plot — to mine — nor leave the
least
Trace of my secret project anywhere around.
Ha! — exiled! —

GUDIEL.

Whence deal you the blow?

DON SALLUST (*starting up*).

From underground!
And my all-unsuspecting tool shall be the Queen! —
Yes, I will be revenged! For twenty years you 've been,
Gudiel, my aid, instructor, and my best of friends;
Through whom, alone, I have accomplished many ends;
With whom I have explored the secret mines of thought:
Soon shall your eyes survey the tangled web I 've wrought.
I go to my estate of Finlas in Castile,
And finish what is half resolved. Time will reveal
The whole ere long; so get thee hence, and straight pre-
pare
For our departure. Be that now your only care.
In the mean time, whilst still the master, in this room
I will receive yon hair-brained trifler — you know whom!
He may be useful to my project: but away!
See to our journey.

[GUDIEL *bows and exit,* SALLUST *calls*

Ruy Blas!

RUY BLAS (*appearing at the back*).

Excellency, say
In what can I now serve you?

DON SALLUST.

As I no more sleep
Within these walls, the keys I shall no longer keep.
You 'll give them up, and close the shutters, sir.

RUY BLAS.

I will,
My lord.

DON SALLUST.

My orders next, then, shall you thus fulfil:
Her Majesty, the Queen, will through this gallery pass
To the great Audience Chamber, after hearing Mass;
Be here, Ruy Blas, within two hours.

RUY BLAS.

I will, my lord.

DON SALLUST (*at the window*).

See you that stranger yonder, who now to the guard
A paper is displaying, and who walks this way?
Show him the narrow stairs, by signal. He 'll obey,
And straightway come.

[RUY BLAS *makes a signal from the window.*

Seek now the chamber where the three
Night Alguazils on duty are, or ought to be.
See if they sleep, or are awake.

RUY BLAS (*goes to door on the right; opens it and looks in*).

My lord, they sleep.

DON SALLUST.

Speak not too loud. I shall have need of you; so keep
Within my call. In fact, sir, see you act the spy,
And keep at distance those who own too sharp an eye.

[*Enters* DON CÆSAR DE BAZAN; *his hat crushed; enveloped in a cloak much the worse for wear, below which are seen his old and wrinkled stockings and split shoes. He wears a long sword. As he enters, he and* RUY BLAS *exchange looks of surprise.*

DON SALLUST (*observing them aside*).

These two are known to one another 't would appear!

[*Exit* RUY BLAS.

SCENE II.

DON SALLUST, DON CÆSAR.

DON SALLUST.

Ha! — brigand! — there you are.

DON CÆSAR.

Yes, Cousin; I am here.

DON SALLUST.

Great pleasure, truly thus so *great* a knave to see!

DON CÆSAR.

I'm charmed —

DON SALLUST.

Good sir, your exploits are well known to me.

DON CÆSAR.

And you appreciate? —

DON SALLUST.

Humph! — their renown is great,
And well becoming such a hair-brained rattle-pate! —
The other night, Don Charles de Mira, I have heard,

Was by some thieves waylaid, who took his much-prized
sword,
As well as pouch. 'T was Easter-eve it happened on,
So, as he chanced to be a knight of good St. John,
The rascals did not steal the cloak he wore.

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed? —
And wherefore?

DON SALLUST.

On the surface of it they could read
The blazon of the Order. That, at least, was civil.
What think you?

DON CÆSAR.

That this wicked age is of the devil!
What? Can our thieves so far forget themselves as this?
St. John bring to their level? — It is much amiss!

DON SALLUST.

And you were with them?

DON CÆSAR.

Well, indeed, I must confess
I was amongst them; nathless in the precious mess
I took no part, and truly laid no finger on
The gentle Charles. I counselled only.

DON SALLUST.

Oh, well done!
Better and better. On the Plaza Mayor then,
But yester-eve when crowds of rough and half-clad men
Rushed pell-mell on the Watch; *you*, too, were there!

DON CÆSAR.

Good lack!
My worthy cousin, I would ne'er do aught so black

As get mixed up in such a dirty rabble fight
As that which then ensued. No, sir, that very night,
Hard by the uproar, 'neath some dimly-lit arcades
I walked, composing verses to the clashing blades;
They did fall to it, truly.

DON SALLUST.

That 's not all.

DON CÆSAR.

What next?

DON SALLUST.

In France, it seems, you are accused by those most vexed,
With having stolen money.

DON CÆSAR.

That, of course, might be;
Because a Frenchman is my natural enemy.

DON SALLUST.

Upon the road to Mons in Flanders, it would seem,
Even the money of the clergy you must deem
Legitimately prey. From Don Bartholomew,
Who had received it for a holy purpose, you
Must needs appropriate it with the hand of force.

DON CÆSAR.

In Flanders? — well — it might be so; but then, of course,
I 've travelled greatly. Is that all?

DON SALLUST.

Don Cæsar, I
Perspire with very shame!

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed. Now, pray you, why?
I 'm very cool.

DON SALLUST.

Our family —

DON CÆSAR.

Let it alone.
You are the representative. I am unknown.

DON SALLUST.

The other morning, sir, as out of church I came,
I was requested by a high and haughty dame,
A marquise, to inform her who the vagabond
She saw before her strutting was. Upon the ground
Dragged a long sword, surmounted by a ragged cloak;
And in his eye and mien too eloquently spoke
Reckless defiance, impudence, keen wit and guile.

DON CÆSAR.

I hope you answered her, with your most sunny smile,
"Ah, that 's my good friend Zafari!" —

DON SALLUST.

Indeed, I blushed —
I felt the tell-tale blood as to my face it rushed.

DON CÆSAR.

I hope the lady laughed? 'T is always my delight
To move the dears to laughter.

DON SALLUST.

Both by day and night
Companions of the lowest sort your steps surround.

DON CÆSAR.

With students, clerks, etc., our streets abound.

DON SALLUST.

What of the other sex?

DON CÆSAR.

Oh, bless their gentle hearts!
In our delightful city they but play their parts.
To their enchanting forms, and lustrous, wicked eyes,
My only matin orisons must e'er arise.

DON SALLUST.

And finally, that prince — that most renowned of thieves
Matalobos of fair Galicia, who achieves
More than all put together, *he* is of your friends.

DON CÆSAR.

Pray stop one moment, cousin, ere the long list ends
Of my delinquencies. Let 's talk plain common sense
For just one moment. When the cold was most intense
One evening last December, I was *naked* — well
So nearly, that it gives me quite a chill to dwell
Upon the word. By good luck that egregious fop,
The Count of Alba, was, by force, compelled to drop
His gorgeous silken doublet —

DON SALLUST.

Well?

DON CÆSAR.

It came to pass
Matalobos did here bestow it.

DON SALLUST.

By the Mass!
And shame you not to own it?

DON CÆSAR.

Wherefore be ashamed?
See for yourself. 'T is like a gorgeous picture, framed
[*Throws open his cloak and displays a splendid rose-coloured silken doublet embroidered with gold.*
With burnished gold! embroidered and tricked out with style
To call from the fastidious a delighted smile!—
What 's more, the pockets are all lined with billets-doux
Fresh, doubtless, from sweet hands; and of an odour, too,
Most grateful to the Count: I know they were to me,
For when with inside empty, which was frequently,
I sate, o'ercome with hunger, disappointment, wrath,
I read, and seemed filled up with love, if not with broth.

DON SALLUST.

Don Cæsar—

DON CÆSAR.

My good cousin, let there be a truce
Both to your kind reproaches and your free abuse.
I am a mighty seignior, and your near relation,
But, just at present, meet not with your approbation.
I 'm Cæsar, Count of Garofa. I had domains,
Riches, grand palaces; but, at my birth, my brains
Got somehow wrong — at least, I must suppose they did,
As twenty fleeting years sufficed to see me rid
Of every stiver of my heritage. Alas!
I grieve much for my creditors; but let that pass.
I gave them all the slip, changed my once honoured name;

And not two people now could tell from whence I came.
I am a boon-companion; free to breathe the air,
Which very oft I do when sleeping in the square
Before some palace. This for some years past I 've done,
And the hap-hazard life has so far with me won
That I care not to change it. 'T is a jovial life!
Albeit precarious, and with adventure rife —
But that 's a trifle. Wine or water I can drink —
Whichever offers first — from neither would I shrink.
Whene'er I feel myself in philosophic vein
I seek the palace — scene of my brief, glorious reign —
And walking up and down in front, I moralise
Upon one fact: how quick we fall! — how slow we rise! —
Yes, freely once my glittering gold I flung away;
And now good cousin mine, lend me ten crowns to-day?

DON SALLUST.

First give an ear to me —

DON CÆSAR (*crossing his arms*).

What may be your intent?

DON SALLUST.

You may be useful, sir; that 's why for you I sent.
Cæsar, I am a lonely man. I 'm rich; and more —
Your elder by some years. I would not close the door
Against you; nay, I anxiously would aid — would balk
The deep abyss of prey. To it I see you walk
With reckless, half-closed eyes: and, worthless as you are,
In that too fatal pathway I would raise a bar.
In short, I 'll pay your debts, and give you once again
Your own; so Zafari must sink — Cæsar remain
As he was once before — in his high state re-dressed —

The idol of the fair — by all the world caressed!
My coffers freely I will open to your use,
And ne'er denominate your outlay as abuse
Of my good nature. No. Relations ever must
Be treated nobly, for their claims —

DON CÆSAR (*exploding with enthusiasm*).

Are always just!
You are about to add. O gentle cousin mine,
Your wit I always looked upon as devilish fine! —
Continue, pray! —

DON SALLUST.

There 's one condition, — only one
To name to you, and then the bargain made is done.
In the mean time, accept my purse. [*Offering it.*

DON CÆSAR (*taking it*).

'T is full of gold!
What sight more glorious can men's gladdened eyes behold!

DON SALLUST.

Five hundred ducats I 'm about to give —

DON CÆSAR (*dazzled*).

Marquis —

DON SALLUST.

And from to-day —

DON CÆSAR.

Cousin! I 'm all your own for this,
Be the conditions whatsoe'er they may — command!
And straightway, at your bidding, I will walk or stand.
Whether the mission I 've to do be good or evil —
E'en if it be to fight a duel with the devil!

DON SALLUST.

'T is not your sword I seek for, worthy Cæsar.

DON CÆSAR.

No? —
I see not in what else I can devotion show.

DON SALLUST (*approaching and lowering his voice*).

You have a very large acquaintance in Madrid
Among the roughs and scamps, and know where they lie hid?

DON CÆSAR.

You do me honour —

DON SALLUST.

Were it of necessity
To raise an uproar, such a thing, of course, could be?

DON CÆSAR (*laughing heartily*).

Is it an opera that you 're about to write?
In what capacity my aid do you invite?
As painter or musician? Fun you know 's my forte.

DON SALLUST.

I speak to Cæsar on affairs of deep import,
And not to Zafari. [*Lowering his voice still more.*
So lend a careful ear
To secrets dark which will no gleam of daylight bear.
Yes; I repeat it — shrouded in the deepest gloom
A certain project must be ripened into bloom
Which will bear baleful fruit. I am not really bad,
But from corroding thought a respite must be had.
Enough. I say you shall be rich, but you must aid
To build a fabric, which shall be so subtly made
That, whilst it dazzles, it shall hold a fine-wrought net

That shall enmesh its victim. You see not, as yet,
My drift; but know that it is vengeance!

DON CÆSAR.

Vengeance?

DON SALLUST.

Yes.

DON CÆSAR.

On whom?

DON SALLUST.

Well — on a woman — nothing more nor less!

DON CÆSAR (*drawing himself up disdainfully and proudly*).

Halt there, my cousin, halt! Speak not another word
Until my sentiments thereon you shall have heard.
The man who secretly, and also basely, tries
To thus revenge himself, by secrets or by lies,
Or any other means, upon a woman frail
Is, in my estimation, placed beyond the pale
Of every feeling man for man can entertain!
I say, did noblest blood flow through his every vein —
Were he the proudest of the proud in rank and name,
Did clarions sound his progress with their loud acclaim,
Could he do aught so vile, despite his name and race,
His manly mind, and no less manly heart debase,
I would behold him on the highest gibbet hang
And join in execrations as around they rang!

DON SALLUST.

Cæsar! —

DON CÆSAR.

Add not another word to what is said.
As for your secret — keep it! Take the dross instead!
[*Dashes the purse down at* SALLUST'S *feet and continues.*

It is an outrage e'en to hear of it. Oh! I
Can understand that men should plunder, rob, and die,
Or cause the death of others. In the deepest night
Seize on some fort, or, as a common robber, fight
Against his jailers, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth,
Regardless of the upshot, man 'gainst man, forsooth!
But basely, secretly to dig a deep abyss
And guide a *woman's* footsteps to it — ere do this,
Ere thus enrich myself at any price so vile
I 'd dare a fierce ordeal — ay, mount a fiery pile,
And self-convicted, even 'mid my terrors grim,
Bid the wild, gaping rabble tear me limb from limb! —

DON SALLUST.

Cousin —

DON CÆSAR.

I seek for nothing at such hands as yours!
My life is in the air of freedom — out of doors —
And when, in town, perchance I shiver, nothing loath
Am I that any thief my nakedness may clothe.
All sense of what some please to call propriety
I banished when I warred against society.
Yes; give me freedom! Let me stretch my weary length
Before some palace, and rejoice in health and strength:
My head well shaded, and my feet within the rays
Of the fierce sun. Enough — farewell. I go my ways.
Let Heaven (always just) decide betwixt us two,
Which is the upright one, Don Sallust. I to you
Leave the obsequious courtiers. They 're your counterparts.
I pit my worthless rags against their cringing hearts —
Dwell with your serpents ever: I my wolves prefer.
[*About to depart.*

DON SALLUST.

Stay yet a moment! —

DON CÆSAR.

Hark you, my most gracious sir!
Let us abbreviate this interview. If so
Its object is a prison — I can straightway go.

DON SALLUST.

Come, come — 't is well. I deemed your nature different.
I 've put you to the proof, and now I 'm quite content.
Give me your hand! —

DON CÆSAR.

What 's this? —

DON SALLUST.

I really did but joke;
And 't was with no ulterior object that I spoke.

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed? — Humph! — singular — I scarce my thoughts connect:
Astonishment upsets me — Let me now reflect:
The plot — the woman — the revenge —

DON SALLUST.

Chimera — all!
The whole collapses in a heap! which you may call
Imagination — folly! — What you please. Mere dreams!

DON CÆSAR.

Aha! — so much the better. And those pleasing gleams
Of generosity about my debts? All froth
As well? Five hundred ducats! Is that also broth
To set before a dullard?

DON SALLUST.

Nay; I 'll bring them here.
[*Moves to back and signs to* RUY BLAS *to enter.*

DON CÆSAR (*watching him from the front of the stage*).

There 's traitor on that countenance: 't is pretty clear.
The lips say "yes" — the cunning glance says "we shall see."

DON SALLUST (*to* RUY BLAS *who enters*).

Ruy Blas, stay here. [*To* CÆSAR.] I 'll soon return.
[*He goes out.*

SCENE III.

DON CÆSAR, RUY BLAS.

DON CÆSAR (*eagerly to* RUY BLAS).

Ha! — can it be
Ruy Blas! — I thought 't was no mistake I made.

RUY BLAS.

And I
Felt sure 't was Zafari that I beheld. But why
Venture within this palace?

DON CÆSAR.

Thereby hangs a tale.
I 'm but a bird. I float on every passing gale.
But you? Why this same livery? Is 't a disguise?

RUY BLAS.

It would be so indeed did I dress otherwise.

DON CÆSAR.

What mean you?

RUY BLAS.

Let me take your hand, and hold it fast
As I was wont to do in that once joyous past

When we were comrades. Oft when scarcely knew I
where
To lay my head; and the next meal was all my care —
Ay, all engrossing — when the cold I could withstand,
Because with freedom roamed I over all the land —
You knew me well; and also knew I was a man
Born of the people, like yourself. Our morn began
Most cheerfully! Brothers, all took us for. We danced.
We drank, we sang until the day was far advanced;
And when night came, beneath the star-lit, azure sky
Still, side by side, we slept beneath one watchful Eye.
Yes; everything we shared. Then came the parting day,
And each went sadly forth upon his lonely way.
And now again we meet, after four fleeting years;
And still before my eyes my Zafari appears
Unaltered; rich though poor; as reckless as of yore —
As if "to-morrow" never waited at his door!
But, brother, what a change is brought about in me!
An orphan, sent to College, out of charity,
I learned the sciences, and also, to my cost
How to be proud and idle; how to dream — be lost
In a poetic heaven of my own, when trade
And toil had better far become me. But arrayed
In my own aimless confidence, I still kept on
When me your mocking laugh to reason would have won.
I know not what ambition stirred within my soul,
But I walked ever onwards toward an unseen goal.
All things seemed possible — all real, and I believed
Fortune required but wooing to be straight achieved!
Whole days before some gorgeous palaces I spent,
To watch the wealthy Great as to and fro they went.
Vague satisfaction! But one day, good brother, dying
With hunger, I espied upon the pavement lying
Some scraps of bread, and ignominiously I ate
Full gladly, although murmuring at my adverse fate.

Yes, barefoot, at the age of twenty, through the streets
I 've wandered musing o'er the bitters and the sweets
Humanity must taste. Great castles in the air
I reared — and projects, high as mountains, and as fair:
I deemed — poor fool! — that by the world I was re-
quired —
See now the upshot! — as a lackey I 'm attired!

DON CÆSAR.

I know that Hunger's portal is a low one, friend;
And he who, when hard driven, must the lowest bend,
May rise the highest. Fortune hath her ebb and flow.
Therefore I say, on Hope your full reliance throw.

RUY BLAS.

You know the Marquis de Finlas my master is?

DON CÆSAR.

I do As residence this place is not amiss.

RUY BLAS.

Until the last half hour I never set my feet
Within the palace walls.

DON CÆSAR.

How comes it that we meet
Here then? Your master has the charge of it, maybe?

RUY BLAS.

To him at all times is the entrée hither free.
Hard by he has a private lodging; but the light
Of day ne'er sees him there. I, too, live near. At night
A key, that he possesses, opes a secret door
Into this palace, and across the royal floor

The Marquis leads his masked companions, who ne'er speak
Except in whispers. What they here discuss, or seek
Is a deep mystery; but, doubtless, these his spies
Are thus instructed where to use their prying eyes.
Two mutes are *my* companions, but 'neath my control:
My name they know not.

DON CÆSAR.

Humph! — 't is cheerful on the whole.
I understand. The secret minions he commands
He here receives. He 's deep, and holds much in his hands.

RUY BLAS.

But yesterday he bade me seek him here at dawn;
And then this odious livery must needs go on
As soon as I arrived.

DON CÆSAR (*taking his hand*).

Cling fast to hope! —

RUY BLAS.

Alas!
You know not, friend, the cost. It is a bitter pass! —
Pride, honour — everything beneath this clothing vile
Must sink. Slavery is rampant! and yet all the while
A furious passion here within consumes! — its breath
Creating torments which are worse by far than death!

DON CÆSAR.

What mean you?

RUY BLAS.

This. Invent, imagine; nay, suppose
A thousand most improbable events arose
Around, before you — to the verge of some abyss

Headlong impelled you, even though the fatal hiss
Of some dread, monstrous reptile pierced your awe-struck ears —
Picture all this, I say, and worse! E'en then appears
Nothing that to my direful secret can compare.
Canst guess?—Oh, who could guess! —My Zafari, I dare
Scarce breathe the words to thee — I love the Queen!

DON CÆSAR.

The Queen! —
Just Heaven! —

RUY BLAS.

Upon a lofty dais may be seen —
Sometimes at Aranjuez, and sometimes in this town —
A man, beneath a canopy, who wears a crown! —
Who though but rarely seen, yet sways one half the earth;
Before whose haughty presence each one sinks his birth —
However high — before whose throne to covered stand
Is deemed the pinnacle of honour in the land:
For all must bow before him, all must humbly kneel
To show how deeply they that lofty presence feel.
Man, like ourselves, why should we own so deep a dread?
Because by his one word we might to death be led! —
Well — lackey as I am — of him I dare now say
I 'm jealous! —

DON CÆSAR.

Jealous of the King! —

RUY BLAS.

Yes — woeful day
That made her wife to him! — Too true — I love his wife!

DON CÆSAR.

Unhappy man! —

RUY BLAS.

Oh, listen! 'T is his worthless life
That is the cause to that poor Queen of misery,
Of endless weariness, of sleepless woe to me!
I see her but too clearly in that vile resort
Of falseness, base servility, they call a court,
Tied to that man, that dullard of the kingly race,
Who, old at thirty, owns but one idea, — the chase!
I see her lovely, youthful, yet neglected thus
When she should, dazzling, shine a centre glorious
Of the surrounding splendour! Bitter is the thought
That such angelic excellence is hither brought
To be so wasted on this second Charles, — the son
Of a most worthless sire. Hark! (for our minutes run
With headlong speed) you know outside the palace walls
The Rosaire Convent stands? and, as each evening falls,
The luckless Queen goes forth to seek its calm retreat;
When there, she seeks a certain favourite garden seat,
And muses long amid the flowers that bloom around.
Her chosen one is blue, and of her German ground
Reminds her; but in this our Spanish soil 't is rare
To find it; yet I sought, and soon discovered where
A whole league hence it thrives. Each day my way I take
To gather just a few, and offering of them make
To her: and when night o'er the city casts its pall
I climb the lofty spike-protected convent wall
To lay them on the seat near where she sadly roves
Beneath those lofty and o'erarching chestnut groves.
But yesterday beside those flowers I dared to place
A folded paper, and within it words to trace
That told of my devotion. Oh, some day, belike
My body will be traversed by a bristling spike,
But I shall be content, if she the flowers obtain
And the love-breathing note!

DON CÆSAR.

'T is madness! pray restrain
Your ardour, and remember there is also one
Who loves the Queen! Count Onaté, a valiant son
Of Mars — a major-domo or a body-guard —
Who some day, ere your flowers can fade, may on the sward
Transfix them and your heart with partisan or brand.
But thus to love the Queen! I fail to understand —
To comprehend what can possess you!

RUY BLAS (*wildly*).

I know not.
But I would barter freely, to exchange my lot
With one of those young lordlings of this splendid court,
The soul within me! Yes, to be in fair report
With her I 'd venture all! stand at no sacrifice
To win one glorious hope — the love-light of her eyes!
O misery tenfold intensified! to think
That I am here upon the very verge — the brink
Of all that 's glorious in the world, yet cannot pass
Beyond! because I see myself, as in a glass,
Cursed with this servile garb upon my back! Oh, earth!
Upon thy fragrant bosom why didst yield me birth?
Oh, Heaven! — Stay — I remember. You have asked me when,
And how I came to love her? Not as other men
Love ordinary women, but with passion vast
As the wide world itself! — with frenzy's burning blast! —

DON CÆSAR.

Be calm —

RUY BLAS (*falling exhausted into a seat*).

I cannot! — pardon me, — and leave me here

'T is not to be expected that your ears can bear,
A madman's woes! one, who beneath a lackey's vest
The passion of a Sovereign nurses in his breast!

DON CÆSAR.

I leave you in your need? *I*, scapegrace that I am —
Who never knew the feeling, love — I basely slam
The door, imaginary though it be, on you! —
My friend! — Believe me, I can still be firm and true,
And, when I get the means, will prove it. In your face
Your hopeless and mad passion I can plainly trace,
And envy you its fervour.

[*They take hands, and for a moment gaze on each other with expressions of sadness and friendship.* DON SALLUST *enters. He comes slowly forward watching them intently.* CÆSAR *and* RUY BLAS *do not see him. In one hand he carries his hat and sword, which he places on a chair; in the other a large purse of gold which he lays on the table.*

DON SALLUST (*to* DON CÆSAR.)

Here 's the money.

[RUY BLAS *starts, and immediately assumes a posture of humility.*

DON CÆSAR (*starting*).

Good —
That is to say — the devil! [*Aside.*] By the Holy Rood!
As sure as fate, he has been listening — even here
Perhaps, or at the door. [*Aloud.*] Don Sallust, thanks!

[*He opens the purse and spreads the money joyfully over the table. Whilst he is counting it,* SALLUST *goes to the back of the stage, and looks at* CÆSAR, *to see whether he is observed by him. He then opens a small door on the right, and, in obedience to his signal, three*

Alguazils, dressed in black and armed with swords, enter. SALLUST *points to* CÆSAR. RUY BLAS *stands like a statue near the table, hearing and seeing nothing.*

DON SALLUST (*in a low voice to Alguazils*).

Draw near,
As soon as that man, laden with this money, leaves,
You 'll follow swiftly, and, ere shelter he receives,
Rush on him — seize him — and, avoiding violence,
To Denia you 'll convey him, and embark him thence.
[*Giving a parchment.*
Here is the warrant. Him, when out at sea, you 'll sell
To Afric's Corsairs. See to this; and so, farewell.
A thousand piastres your reward will be.
[*Alguazils bow and exit.*

DON CÆSAR (*who has just finished counting the money*).

Now this
Is not a pleasure any one would like to miss —
To count his gold and silver. To arrange each pile
Symmetrically with a very pleasant smile! —
[*Divides it equally, and then turns to* RUY BLAS.
Good brother, here 's thy half.

RUY BLAS.

How? —

DON CÆSAR (*pointing to the gold*).

Take it, man. Be free!

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

The devil! —

RUY BLAS (*shaking his head*).

No, 't is here; here only I must be.

DON CÆSAR.

Well, as you please, my friend. You play a doubtful game.
Who 's wiser of the two? —

[*Throws money back into purse, and puts it away.*

DON SALLUST (*observing them aside*).

Their features — much the same.

DON CÆSAR.

Adieu!

RUY BLAS.

Thy hand! —

[*They shake hands and* CÆSAR *goes out without seeing* SALLUST, *who keeps apart.*

SCENE IV.

RUY BLAS, DON SALLUST.

DON SALLUST.

Ruy Blas?

RUY BLAS.

My lord?

DON SALLUST.

Say? — am I right?
When you came here this morning it was hardly light?

RUY BLAS.

In silence to the porter, when the dawn was grey,
I gave your pass that opened up to me the way.

DON SALLUST.

Your cloak enveloped you?

RUY BLAS.

My lord, rest sure it did.

DON SALLUST.

No eyes, then, here caught sight of what beneath was hid?

RUY BLAS.

Nor here, nor in the town.

DON SALLUST.

That is as it should be.
Shut yonder door, sir.

[*Indicating door through which* CÆSAR *passed.*

Good. Now doff this livery

[RUY BLAS *takes off his livery coat and throws it upon a chair.*

Give me a specimen — you write a fair, bold hand!

[*Signs to* RUY BLAS *to sit at the table and write, which he does.*

To-day you 're secretary; so, pray understand
I keep no secrets from you. Now; a billet-doux
To Donna Praxedis, love-queen, and demon too
Upon occasion. So, begin: "A danger, deep
And terrible, is hanging o'er my head. To sleep
I dare not, so to aid me in my pressing need
I pray thee, O my gentle queen, use all the speed
That time will lend thee, and this night to me repair
At my lone house, or sink I must in deep despair."

[*Laughs and stops short.*

A danger! Yes — that's good. The way I've turned that phrase
Pleases me well. Most women have a sort of craze

For rushing to the rescue of the very men
Who cause themselves to fall! Ha! — such is life. Now
then,
Continue thus: "Unknown, unrecognized at night,
Facing the avenue, a door will meet your sight;
And there you'll enter. One most faithful to the cause
Will welcome you within." Perfection this! Now pause
And sign.

RUY BLAS.

Your name, my lord?

DON SALLUST.

Not so, Cæsar — that name
Suits well for an adventure.

RUY BLAS.

I presume the dame
Is never like to recognize the hand?

DON SALLUST.

No fear.
The seal is all sufficient. Frequently from here
In the same style I write. But listen, sir! — this day
I leave you in the palace, and must speed away.
Your circumstances are about to undergo
A wondrous change: to me, before it can be so,
Obedience most implicit you will have to swear: —
As yet I've found you docile —

RUY BLAS (*bowing*).

My good lord —

DON SALLUST.

Prepare
For greater favours — for a wider destiny —

RUY BLAS (*holding up the note*).

To whom shall I address this note?

DON SALLUST.

Leave it to me.

[*Going up to* RUY BLAS *with a significant air.*

I have your happiness at heart.

[*A pause. He signs to him to place himself again at the table.*

Write. "I, Ruy Blas,
The lackey to Monseigneur Marquis of Finlas,
Will faithfully, on all occasions, at command,
Obey his orders. Witness here this day my hand."
Now, sign your name. Put in the date. So. That is well.

[RUY BLAS *having signed and dated the paper as directed,* DON SALLUST *folds it, and puts it carefully away with the previous note in his portfolio.*

A singular coincidence. It so befell.
A sword was brought to me to-day — ha! there it lies
Upon that chair. [*He takes the sword from the chair.*
The belt, you see, with sunny dyes
Is richly broidered. Here 's a flower upon the hilt
Carved by a famous hand, and gorgeously gilt —
What think you of it?

[*Passes the belt over* RUY BLAS'S *shoulder.*

Very well, it might suit *you* —
Upon my word, it really does become you too!
Some one is here. [*Listens.*] The Queen herself will pass ere long.
The Marquis del Basto is coming.

[*The doors at the back are thrown open.* DON SALLUST *removes his cloak, and throws it over the shoulders of* RUY BLAS, *who seems half stupefied with astonishment*

SCENE V.

DON SALLUST, RUY BLAS, *the* MARQUIS DEL BASTO. *Afterwards the* MARQUIS DE SANTA CRUZ, *then the* COUNT OF ALBA *and all the Court.*

DON SALLUST (*to the* MARQUIS).

Ere the throng
Of courtiers here arrives, Lord Marquis, give me leave —
And my young cousin, Count of Garofa, receive.

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

Good Heavens! —

DON SALLUST (*aside to him*).

Hush! —

MARQUIS (*saluting* RUY BLAS).

Sir, I am charmed —
[*Takes* RUY BLAS'S *hand which he yields to him, but with much embarrassment.*

DON SALLUST (*aside to* RUY BLAS).

Spoil not the game.
Salute him! [RUY BLAS *bows profoundly to the* MARQUIS.

MARQUIS (*to* RUY BLAS).

Sir, your mother's was a much loved name.—
He 's greatly changed. I scarcely recognise him now.
[*Aside to* DON SALLUST

DON SALLUST (*to* MARQUIS).

Well — ten years' absence —

MARQUIS.

True —

DON SALLUST (*his hand on* RUY BLAS's *shoulder*).

The same free soul, I vow!
Do you remember, Marquis, what a prodigal! —
How he made ducks and drakes of money, jewels — all!
What balls, what concerts — galas, whereto all were bid,
That fairly dazzled — yea, half-frenzied bright Madrid! —
Then came a crash! — three years, and all this fire was out.
Now India sends him home once more to flaunt about! —

RUY BLAS (*aside to* SALLUST).

My lord —

DON SALLUST.

Call me thy cousin — so indeed we are;
And our old lineage can be followed up so far
That distance veiling, like a mist, the gorgeous scene
Steals nothing from the splendour lurking 'neath the screen.
Of Finlas, Marquis, *I*; *you* Cæsar of Bazan —
Both equal in our rank — not one the better man.
Your source, fair Aragon — mine, Portugal! We tower
Proud trees! I, fruit of one: you of the other, flower!

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

What motive can be his?

[*During the above speech the* MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ, DON ALVAR DE BAZAN, *a venerable man with white hair and moustache has approached them.*

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

I've listened; and with you
Must claim the privilege to call him cousin, too.

DON SALLUST.

It is quite true, my lord. We of the same stock come.
Don Cæsar — [*Presenting* RUY BLAS.

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

Surely 't is not he 't was said the tomb
Had claimed some years ago ?

DON SALLUST.

The same.

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

Returned to life !

DON SALLUST.

From India. You remember him ?

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.

It was my wife
Who saw him born ; and I — well, very nearly, too.

DON SALLUST (*aside to* RUY BLAS).

The dotard's almost blind ; that 's why at once he knew
Your face and figure !

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ (*to* RUY BLAS).

Cousin, let me grasp your hand.

RUY BLAS (*bowing*).

My lord —

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ (*to* RUY BLAS).

I 'm charmed indeed. My aid you can command.

DON SALLUST (*taking* SANTA CRUZ *aside*).

I 'm going to pay his debts ; and you, my worthy lord,

Material help to me can very well afford
If, by your influence within this palace walls,
Some honourable post for his acceptance falls
About the King — or Queen —

MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ (*in a low voice*).

Hum — ha — Well, let me see —
Of course, he 's of a most distinguished family.
I 'll think of it.

[SALLUST *passes on, and presents* RUY BLAS *to several lords, and finally to the* COUNT OF ALBA, *who is exquisitely dressed.*

DON SALLUST.

This is my cousin, Don Cæsar,
The Count of Garofa, close by Velalcazar.
[*The courtiers salute* RUY BLAS, *who still seems confused.*
I did not see you at the ballet last night, Count —
[*To* ALBA.] The dancing was delightful.
[*Admiring his jewelled collar, etc.*
What a splendid mount
Your collar has!

COUNT OF ALBA.

Ha! — yes; and I had one before
Which was intrinsically worth a great deal more,
But it was stolen by Matalobos, who took
Not only that, but with it my best doublet — Look!
The Queen is here.

HUISSIER (*from the back*).

My lords, your several stations gain,
And give your morning welcome to the Queen of Spain.

DON SALLUST (*aside to* RUY BLAS).

Bethink yourself, Ruy Blas! How! do you thus give way

To agitation? Rouse, man! 'T is your dawning day
Of fortune! I 'm about to quit Madrid, and give
My house near here for your own use. Go there, and live,
And look upon it, with its servants, as your own.
I yield you everything, — the secret keys alone
Excepted. Do my wishes, and your fortune 's made.
So, forward in your path! — 't is clear. Be not afraid.
Blindfold, go on! my eyes, Ruy Blas, will act for *yours.*
Ere long, fresh orders you 'll receive. See — at the doors
More guards appear. [*More guards are seen advancing.*

HUISSIER (*in a loud voice*).

The Queen!

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

The Queen! —

[THE QUEEN, *magnificently attired, surrounded by her ladies and pages, appears under a canopy borne by four gentlemen of the chamber bare-headed.* RUY BLAS, *overcome by emotion, regards the whole as if it were some dazzling vision. The grandees all cover in the presence of the Sovereign.* DON SALLUST *rushes to the chair on which lies the hat, and hurriedly puts it upon* RUY BLAS'S *head.*

DON SALLUST (*aside to* RUY BLAS).

Are you insane,
Cæsar? On with your hat! You 're a grandee of Spain!

RUY BLAS (*mechanically, aside to* SALLUST).

And what command, my lord, do you now lay on me?

DON SALLUST (*aside, indicating* THE QUEEN).

That you will please this woman — yes, her *lover* be!

The Entrance of the Queen.

ACT II.

THE QUEEN OF SPAIN.

SCENE. — *A saloon contiguous to the bedchamber of* THE QUEEN. *On the left a small door leading into this apartment. On the right, in a recess, another small door. At the back, large windows standing open. Large table in the centre. Fauteuils, etc. The statue of a saint, richly carved, on a bracket against the wall. Under it the inscription, "Santa Maria Esclava." On the opposite side a Madonna, in front of which hangs a golden lamp. Near to it a full-length portrait of King Charles II. It is afternoon on a beautiful summer day.*

As the curtain rises THE QUEEN, DONNA MARIA DE NEUBOURG *is discovered sitting in one corner of the room surrounded by young and beautiful ladies.* THE QUEEN *wears a rich robe of white and silver. She is busy with her embroidery frame, and from time to time interrupts her employment to talk. At the opposite corner of the room the* DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE, *Camerera Mayor, sits in a high-backed chair, also engaged in embroidery. She is an old lady dressed in black. Near to her are several Duennas working at a table. At the back, standing stiffly at attention, is* DON GURITAN, *the Major-domo. A military-looking man of about fifty years of age, and dressed with exaggerated elegance, and has a profusion of ribbons all about him, even in his shoes.*

SCENE I.

THE QUEEN, DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE, DON GURITAN, CASILDA, *Duennas, Ladies of the Court.*

THE QUEEN.

Don Sallust then is gone? I ought to feel at ease,
And yet I am not. Strange! his presence seems to freeze
The blood within my veins. He hates me.

CASILDA.

He is gone —
Exiled at your request!

THE QUEEN.

He hates me — me alone.

CASILDA.

Your Majesty! —

THE QUEEN.

'T is true, Casilda — true, though strange —
Yet even from the first I 've marked in him no change:
My evil angel always. But the other day,
When to kiss hands he came, before he went away,
He joined the usual throng that passed before the throne
Whereon I sate, my eyes on sudden caught his own
Which seemed to flash vindictively as he, in turn,
Bent o'er my hand. His kiss seemed on my flesh to burn
As though a serpent's mouth had touched it! And I saw —
Even as he retreated — his fierce fingers draw
The dagger partly from its sheath — I shuddered then!

CASILDA.

Nay, madame —

THE QUEEN.

Girl, that kiss e'er haunts me, even when
I seek my couch and sleep. Still, in a hideous dream
I feel its fire; I see the fierce, vindictive gleam
Of those dread eyes, which then some monstrous demon owns,
And tremors seize me lest I hear in scathing tones
The hatred burning in that serpent's kiss! — I start,
And wake; the blood half-frozen round my beating heart!
What say you now to this?

CASILDA.

Dear madame, fantasy.

THE QUEEN.

It may be so; but care lies heavily on me! —
[*Aside.*] Yes; from their eyes my inward sorrow I must hide.
[*To* CASILDA.] Tell me — those mendicants that shrank away outside,
Are they still there?

CASILDA (*goes to window*).

Yes, madame; in the courtyard still.

THE QUEEN.

Throw them my purse.

CASILDA (*takes the purse and throws it out of window*).

Oh, madame, you indeed fulfil
Your duties nobly.
[*She points to* DON GURITAN, *who still maintains the same position as before, but who has his eyes fixed in mute admiration on* THE QUEEN.
Pray you, have some pity on
The faithful Count Onaté, whose fixed eyes have shone
With adoration on you for the last half hour.
Give him a word, if nothing more be in your power.

THE QUEEN (*aside to her*).

It wearies me to look at him.

CASILDA.

Fair Sovereign, yea —
But grant him just one word.

THE QUEEN (*aloud*).

Count Onaté — good day.

[DON GURITAN, *with three profound bows, approaches* THE QUEEN, *and, with a deep sigh, kisses her hand, which* THE QUEEN *permits with an indifferent and abstracted air.* DON GURITAN *then returns to his place at the side of the Camerera Mayor's chair.*

CASILDA.

Poor heron! on the sweet pure streamlet thus he throws
His eager glance. He dips, and strikes; then off he goes
Delighted for the time.

THE QUEEN.

Hush!

CASILDA.

'T is for him, I ween,
A joy, one word, however simple, from the Queen!
[*Admiring a casket on a small table near to her.*
Oh, what a lovely casket!

THE QUEEN.

I've the key of it.

CASILDA.

This scented sandal-wood is truly exquisite!

THE QUEEN (*giving* CASILDA *the key*).

Open it, child. You'll find it full of relics. These
I mean to send to Neubourg. They are sure to please
My father.
[*She pauses an instant, as if lost in thought: then resumes aside.*
No! I will not now give way to thought,

For what there lies is with such dark discomfort fraught,
That better 't is to banish it. [*To* CASILDA.] Away, my child,
And seek a book within my chamber — I am wild,
Or mad! — The books are all in Spanish. There 's not one
In German. I am weary. What can I have done
That the King keeps thus ever from me? In the chase
His time is passed; and in six months I 've seen his face
For twelve days only.
[*Relapses into reverie; then rouses herself, and starts up.*
I will now go forth!

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising and curtseying*).
Before
The Queen goes forth, the order is that every door
That bars her passage shall stand open; but the hand
That wields the keys must be a grandee of the land,
And he is not within the palace at this hour.

THE QUEEN.
So I am but a prisoner! What avails my power
As Queen, then, Duchess?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*curtseying profoundly*).
I am Camerera Mayor:
As such I do my duty. [*Reseats herself.*

THE QUEEN (*reseating herself, and resting her head upon her hand*).
Then to thought and care
I must resign myself again! [*Aloud.*] No, no! Bring cards! —
Ladies, we 'll play together.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising, to ladies*).

Hold! She who regards
Her own position here will pause. No Queen, or King,
May touch a card, unless, perchance, the game should bring
Their equals, or relations, round them. 'T is the rule,
And law.

THE QUEEN (*angrily*).

Send then for my relations!

CASILDA (*aside*).

Starched old fool!

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*crossing herself*).

The reigning King, my liege, was of his kin bereft
When died his pious mother. He alone is left.
[*Curtseys and reseats herself.*

THE QUEEN (*to* CASILDA).

Then let them serve the luncheon. I can eat, at least.

CASILDA.

Yes, surely, madame.

THE QUEEN.

You shall join me in the feast.

CASILDA.

Ah, that will be delightful! [*Aside.*] Will the old one groan?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising and curtseying*).

The Queen, his Majesty being absent, eats alone.
[*Reseats herself.*

THE QUEEN (*excitedly*).

This is too much! Good heavens! what am I to do?
I must not play — not eat — I am a prisoner, too!
For the last twelvemonth I have lived this wretched life!

CASILDA (*aside, regarding* THE QUEEN *with compassion*).

'T is paying much to be a mighty monarch's wife, —
This weary court existence! To be thus immured,
And every look and motion watched: and those endured
Who are scarce bearable — such as yon lover there
Who stands all day admiring, with his nose in air!
[*Indicating* GURITAN.

THE QUEEN (*to* CASILDA).

What shall we do? Come, think of something.

CASILDA.

Madame, send
Straight for the Ministers. Bid them all here attend
And hold a council, in the absence of the King,
In presence of your Majesty.

THE QUEEN (*smiling*).

That 's scarce the thing
In which to find amusement. Where 's the humour in
Eight sinister and wrinkled visages? To win
A smile from them would be a giant's task. No, child;
No pleasantry from them could ever be beguiled.
I love not politics, which is their meat and drink,
Their breath and life: so of some better subject think.

CASILDA.

Well, then, for your amusement shall I summon here
A gallant, elegant, and youthful cavalier?

THE QUEEN.

Casilda! —

CASILDA.

Madame, 't would be really quite a treat
If with a youthful visage we could only meet; —
Our eyes, forever fixed upon these ancient crones,
Will lose their first fresh lustre, as a voice its tones
For want of practice.

THE QUEEN.

Laugh, thou thoughtless one; some day
Thy heart will sink, perhaps, beneath the stern array
Of woes besieging it. When sleep forsakes the eyes
How soon, alas! joy spreads her painted wings, and flies!
One only joy to me is for the present left,
That is my garden walk — of all the rest bereft.

CASILDA.

And yet, O Queen, that may be but a doubtful joy!
Treason may lurk behind the marbles to destroy:
And then the convent walls are high, — so very high
They overtop the trees —

THE QUEEN.

But shut not out the sky! —
Would I could wander forth!

CASILDA (*lowering her voice*).

This is a prison, drear
Though brilliant — wearisome — and, Heaven knows,
austere
As antiquated pomp can make it. You can be,
Whene'er it pleases you, as the plumed heron, free! —
Say but one single word, and, under cloud of night,
Into the town we 'll wander.

THE QUEEN.

Hush! — clandestine flight! —
Never!

CASILDA.

'T would be so easy —

THE QUEEN.

Peace! —

[*Moves away from* CASILDA *and relapses into reverie.*

Would I were back
In Germany, with my good parents, and could track
My once loved rambles 'mid its fair and leafy bowers,
In days of yore — when I could cull its freshest flowers
And, with my sister, weave them in a garland. Yes,
Well I remember when the dark man, in dark dress,
Before me stood, and told me in his high-flown strain,
"Madame, I bow before the future Queen of Spain."
Joyous, my father; and my mother, through her tears,
Prayed Heaven incessantly to grant me happy years!
Alas! e'en now, perchance, they both together weep,
For they have learned, ere this, what vigils I must keep —
What weary hours I pass. My German birds are dead!

[CASILDA, *who has crept near to* THE QUEEN, *pretends to wring the neck of a bird, at the same time regarding the Camerera Mayor.*

My German flowers must not before me raise the head.
No words of love e'er greet me; yet I am a Queen —
And once I had my freedom. [*To* CASILDA.] True, those walls they screen
Much that at evening would be pleasing. Woe is me!
I 'm weary! [*A song is heard outside at a distance.*
What is that?

CASILDA.

Some peasants it must be
Who, as they toil the hot and dusky road along,
Are keeping up their spirits with a joyful song.

[*The chorus of voices draws nearer and nearer, and at last, as they pass in front of the palace, the words of the song become audible.*

SONG.

Ah, where then is the good
Of listening to a bird
That warbles in the wood?
In thee its voice is heard.

The stars with doubtful gleam
In heaven's azure rise;
But purer is the beam
From thy bright loving eyes!

Sweet April, poets sing,
Renews the faded bower;
But in thy heart shall spring
The fairest, sweetest flower!

This bright-winged bird of fire,
This day-star from above,
This flower that must aspire,
Is all-absorbing Love!

[*The voices gradually die away in the distance.*

THE QUEEN (*musingly*).

Love! Yes, they must be happy. Ah, their voices make
My half-crushed heart rejoice, and, at the same time, ache.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*to* DUENNAS).

Those women's song disturbs the Queen. Go, send them hence!

THE QUEEN.

Poor women! No; to us their song gives no offence
Leave them to pass in peace.
[*To* CASILDA, *pointing to one of the windows at the back.*
From there, the wood less thick
Will yield a view of them. Come to the window, quick!
[*She goes towards the window with* CASILDA.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*rising and curtseying*).

A Queen of Spain should never from the window gaze.

THE QUEEN (*stops, and returns to her seat*).

E'en so. The sun that towards the west now points his rays;
The waning glories of the slow declining light;
The coming splendours of the azure, starry night;
The distant songs that hail the welcome hours of rest,
Are now no more for me. Can it be for the best
That I should be cut off from all the world?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*making signs that all should retire*).

To-day
Is sacred to Apostles. Ladies, haste away.

THE QUEEN.

You leave me?

CASILDA.

Madame, to the order we must bow.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*curtseying profoundly*).

We leave your Majesty to your devotions now.

[*All retire.*

SCENE II.

THE QUEEN (*alone*).

To my devotions? Rather say, to bitter thought!
For how escape when, face to face, thus with it brought?
Poor soul in darkness rayless! [*In reverie*
Yes, they have left me — all!
The mark of that one hand in blood upon the wall! —

He must be wounded. Why, oh, why such hazard run
To climb the guarded height? and then, so little won!
To bring those few blue flowers that they refuse me here,
To brave the dangerous spikes that mangle. Yes, with fear,
And yet with pleasure, did I find a piece of lace
Torn in the daring effort; and it finds a place
Upon my heart! Oh, every drop of blood thus spilled
Out-values all the tears my eyes so oft have filled.
Each time that I have sought yon tree-embowered seat
My prayer has been that Heaven would guide away my feet —
Yet I return! Now three whole days have passed away,
And he comes not again with flowers to cheer me. May
Thy wound, poor youth, soon heal! May'st never know the smart
That tortures thus in exile my lone, careworn heart!
Thou riskest everything to bring to me that flower,
And, in return, seek'st naught — no rank, nor place, nor power —
To yield me pleasure e'en thy life-blood would be given —
Blessings rest on thee, unknown youth, on earth — in Heaven!

[*She suddenly places her hand on her heart.*

His letter is like fire upon my heart!

[*Relapses into reverie.*

Then he —
Implacable Don Sallust! Even now I see
Him near me standing. Like some spectre, dark and grim,
He menaces me! Must I then be lost by him?
Or by the other one, my better angel, saved! —
Betwixt the two I stand. He, who hath so much braved,
Will save me from the other! Feeble feel I now
Although a Queen! [*Kneeling before the Virgin.*
Madonna, I before thee bow,

Yet scarce dare raise my eyes to thee!

[*Suddenly starting up.*

Great Heaven! — the lace! —

The flower! — the letter!

[*She tears from her bosom a crumpled letter, a fragment of lace stained with blood, and a faded bouquet of blue flowers, which she throws upon the table, and again falls upon her knees.*

Oh, avert not now thy face
Star of the sea! — hope of the martyr! Grant thine aid!
Thou who art ever on the weakest side arrayed;
Come to my call!—[*Interrupting herself.*] That letter!

[*Half turning towards the table.*

Yes! — it lures me on!
I will not read it more! O Virgin! — look upon
My weakness and support me!

[*She rises and takes a few steps towards the table, then stops, but finally throws herself upon the letter as if unable to resist its attraction.*

I must read once more,
For the last time, and tear it! — then the task is o'er!

[*She smiles sorrowfully.*

Alas! just one month since I made the same remark!

[*Summoning resolution she opens and reads the letter.*

"Madame, a man who loves you, suffers in the dark,
That hides him. Earth-worm as he is, he loves the star
That gilds its glorious pathway in the skies afar."

[*Replaces the letter on the table.*

If that the soul should be athirst, it needs must drink —
And even were it poison, would not from it shrink!

[*She puts the letter and the lace back into her bosom.*

The world is barren to me; yet I fain would love
Some one, yea, e'en the King; but him I fail to move
To any show of feeling. Oh, that I could bring —

[*The great doors at the back are thrown open, and a* HUISSIER *enters.*

HUISSIER (*in a loud voice*).

A letter from the King!

THE QUEEN (*with a joyful cry, as if suddenly awakened*).

I'm saved! — at last! — the King!

SCENE III.

QUEEN, DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE, CASILDA, DON GURITAN, *Ladies of the Court, Pages,* RUY BLAS.

[*All enter in solemn procession. The* DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE *at their head; then the ladies.* RUY BLAS *remains at the back of the stage. He is splendidly dressed, and his mantle hangs over his left arm, hiding it. Two Pages bearing the letter from the King on a cushion covered with cloth of gold, kneel at a short distance from* THE QUEEN.

RUY BLAS (*aside, at the back*).

How lovely is the Queen! But why have I come here?

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

'T is Heaven's deed! — Thanks, Monseigneur.

[*Turning to King's portrait.*

Whence do ye bear
This letter?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

From Aranjuez, may it please your Grace,
Where his most pious Majesty enjoys the chase.

THE QUEEN.

I thank him from my soul. He deems, no doubt, I grieve
At his long absence, and that I would fain receive
Some token of his love. Pray, give it me!

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Excuse
My mention of the rule, which is that I peruse
The letter first. [*Points to the letter with a deep curtsey.*

THE QUEEN.

So. Be your duty then fulfilled.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*taking and slowly opening the letter*).

"Madame, — The wind is high, and six wolves I have killed."

Signed, "Charles."

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

Alas! —

DON GURITAN (*to* DUCHESS).

And is that all?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Yes, Count; that 's all.

CASILDA (*aside*).

'T is a large letter to contain a very small
Communication. Six wolves and a boisterous wind
Are in a narrow compass easily confined.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*tendering letter to* THE QUEEN)

Will 't please your Majesty —

THE QUEEN (*refusing to take it*).

No.

CASILDA (*to the* DUCHESS).

Can it really be
That *that* is all?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Of course. Would you expect to see
A long epistle? As you know, our gracious King
Is hunting daily, and thinks not of anything
Outside the sport. He pauses — writes — that is, dictates —
[*Re-examining the letter.*

THE QUEEN (*snatching the letter from her*).

Dictates! — Let me examine it. 'T is as she states;
Saving the signature, 't is not his hand. [*Aside.*] But this —
Oh, can it be? or must I from my mind dismiss
The thought as an illusion? — No; it is the same!
[*Placing her hand on her heart.*
The hand that wrote is here.
[*To the* DUCHESS.] Who with this letter came?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*pointing to* RUY BLAS).

He 's there.

THE QUEEN (*turning half round to* RUY BLAS).

This Cavalier?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

Yes, madame, by command
He brought the letter to you from the King's own hand.
'T is a young Seigneur, Marquis Santa Cruz commends
Through me; and, for your special service, he attends.

THE QUEEN.

What is his name?

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.

It is Don Cæsar de Bazan,
And Count of Garofa. 'T is said, he is a man
Of very high accomplishments.

THE QUEEN.

Indeed. 'T is well —
I 'll speak with him. [*To* RUY BLAS.] Sir Count? —

RUY BLAS (*aside, with emotion*).

Sweetly those accents fell.
She speaks to me!

THE QUEEN.

Approach. [RUY BLAS, *pale and trembling, advances.*

DON GURITAN (*with jealous envy, aside*).

If he comes here, and stays,
Then I shall not remain.

THE QUEEN (*to* RUY BLAS).

You come from Aranjuez?

RUY BLAS.

Yes, madame.

THE QUEEN.

And the King was well? [RUY BLAS *bows.*
And did dictate
To you this letter for me?

RUY BLAS (*hesitating a moment*).

Grant me leave to state
That, mounted for the chase, to an assistant near
His wishes were conveyed —

THE QUEEN (*observing him, aside*).

His eyes to me appear
Like lances in the rest. [*Aloud.*] Good. Leave us, sir — yet, stay!

[RUY BLAS, *about to go out, returns to* THE QUEEN.

Around his Majesty was there a fair array
Of Lords? [RUY BLAS *bows.*] Who were they?

RUY BLAS.

Pardon me, I do not know
The names they bore. Three days were all I had, to go,
To stay, and to return.

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

Three days! — [*Fixes a troubled look upon him.*

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

She is a wife —
And of another! — Bitter is the inward strife
That jealousy has kindled! —

DON GURITAN (*aside to* RUY BLAS).

Hark, sir? You, I hear
Are Groomsman of the Chamber? Your official care
To-night 't will be, in case his Majesty should come,
To point the way into the Queen's retiring room.

RUY BLAS (*with emotion*).

I — point the way! — [*Aloud.*] The King is absent.

DON GURITAN.

All the same
He may surprise us.

RUY BLAS.

Ha! —

DON GURITAN (*observing* RUY BLAS, *aside*).

What in Saint Jago's name
Ails the young fellow?

THE QUEEN (*who has kept her eyes fixed on* RUY BLAS).

Oh, how pale he is.

[RUY BLAS *staggers, and leans on the back of a fauteuil.*

CASILDA (*to* THE QUEEN).

He faints!
Dear madame.

RUY BLAS (*with great effort*).

Nay — 't is naught — fatigue — so please the Saints
A passing weakness merely — Ha!—the King! [*Aside.*
[*He falls exhausted into the fauteuil, and his left hand, which was hidden under his cloak, is now disclosed bandaged with blood-stained linen.*

CASILDA (*to* THE QUEEN).

His hand
Is wounded, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Wounded!—

CASILDA

Doubtless he could stand
The pain no longer.

THE QUEEN.

Hasten!—Take my vinaigrette—
Let him inhale it.

[THE QUEEN *at this moment notices the lace on* RUY BLAS'S *right sleeve.*

The same lace!

[*She draws a phial from her bosom, and in her confusion the piece of lace, that was hidden there, comes with it.*

RUY BLAS, *whose eyes have never left her, sees the fragment of lace. Their eyes meet.*

RUY BLAS (*faintly*).

Not yet — not yet —
I would not die! —

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

'T is he! —

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

Ah! — in her bosom sweet
It lay! — Yes, knowing this, death would become a treat.

[*During the confusion occasioned by the ladies pressing round* RUY BLAS, *what passes between him and* THE QUEEN *is not noticed.*

CASILDA (*causing* RUY BLAS *to inspire the vinaigrette*).

How came you to be wounded? Was it lately, sir? —
Re-opened on the journey? — You did wrong to stir
Abroad in such a plight. Better do anything
Than ride post-haste to bring this letter from the King.

THE QUEEN.

A truce to questions, good Casilda.

DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE (*to* CASILDA).

Child, 't is clear
The Queen recks not of them.

THE QUEEN.

E'en if the Cavalier
Had writ the letter, he might bring it, might he not?

CASILDA.

But, madame, he has not acknowledged this, I wot,
By aught that he has said.

THE QUEEN (*aside*).

That 's true. [*Aloud.*] Enough.

CASILDA (*to* RUY BLAS).

My lord,
Do you feel better now?

RUY BLAS.

I do.

THE QUEEN (*to her Ladies*).

Our guest restored,
Ladies, we will retire. As far as we can learn,
We must not cherish hope the King will yet return,
But will continue hunting. [*To the Pages.*] See to this young Count.
Conduct him to his chamber.

[*She retires with her suite to her apartment.*

CASILDA (*watching* THE QUEEN *as she goes out*).

Yes; and ere I mount
To mine, I 'd like to learn the secret of your soul.

[*Exit after* THE QUEEN, *taking the box of relics with her.* RUY BLAS *seems to listen with great delight to the last words of* THE QUEEN, *and appears to be in a kind of dreamy condition. He espies the piece of lace which* THE QUEEN *in her confusion let fall upon the carpet, and eagerly picks it up, covering it with kisses.*

RUY BLAS (*with upraised eyes*).

Oh, aid me, gracious Heaven, as I near the goal
Of my one hope, to keep my reason in its strength! —
This! in her bosom! —

[*He hides it in his breast. Enter* DON GURITAN *by the same door through which he had followed* THE QUEEN.

[*He walks slowly up to* RUY BLAS *without saying a word, and half draws his sword which he seems to measure with that of* RUY BLAS. *Being unequal, he sheaths it again.* RUY BLAS *watches his proceedings with astonishment.*

SCENE IV.

RUY BLAS, DON GURITAN.

DON GURITAN (*as he sheaths his sword*).

They shall be of equal length.

RUY BLAS.

Pray, sir, what may you mean?

DON GURITAN.

That in the year of grace
Sixteen and fifty, Alicante beheld my face —
A gallant deep in love. A rival, too, was there
Who tried his best to woo from me my lady fair:
He was a comely youth as proud as Lucifer,
But that availed him nothing, for I killed him, sir. —
[RUY BLAS *seeks to interrupt him here, but* GURITAN, *with a gesture of impatience, continues.*
Then somewhat later on: the date that now I fix
Will fit into the year Sixteen and Sixty-six:
Gil, Count of Iscola — magnificent was he —
Stepped in betwixt my sweet Angelica and me.
A billet-doux, he tried to send her by his slave,
Grifel de Viserta, into my hands she gave.
The slave was killed by order — *I* the master slew. —

RUY BLAS.

Don Guritan! —

DON GURITAN (*continuing*).

In Eighty or in Eighty-two —
Later however — I did think myself deceived
By my then reigning Beauty; and, of course, believed
I found her gallant in a truly handsome youth,
One Tirso Gamonal. If I must speak the truth,
His taste in dress was faultless; and it was the age
When e'en one's mules were shod with gold: well, in my rage
I killed him too —

RUY BLAS.

Excuse me, sir — What is your aim
In this long prelude?

DON GURITAN.

That the sportsman marks his game
Before he fells it; or, to make it even shorter,
When we draw from a well, our only aim is water: —
That without any doubt to-morrow morning's sun
Will rise at four o'clock; and that a road doth run
Behind a lonely chapel, and reveals a spot
Most suitable to those whose blood, by nature hot,
Occasion cools. Your name is Cæsar, so I hear,
Don Guritan, Count Onaté 's the one I bear.

RUY BLAS.

Enough, sir: you 'll be met with.

[*During* GURITAN'S *last speech* CASILDA *has entered on tip-toe by the little door at the back, and heard what was said.*

CASILDA (*aside*).

What? — a duel? — So.
Of this choice meeting shall our Sovereign straightway know!

[*She goes out by the same door.*

DON GURITAN (*with the same coolness*).

For your instruction, sir, perhaps 't would be as well
If I just slightly on my thoughts and feelings dwell.
My tastes are few and moderate, but I dislike
Beyond all things, your man who thinks that he can strike
With admiration all the fair sex: that he need
Just twirl his moustache, wink his eye, and straight succeed!
Or, feeling ill from some mere scratch, lean on a chair
With graceful attitude, and thus attract the fair.

RUY BLAS.

I really fail to understand —

DON GURITAN.

Now, there you 're wrong:
I know that you have understood me all along.
T is the same lovely being both of us admire,
And to her good opinion both of us aspire: —
There 's one of us too many in this palace, sir;
So now you plainly know to what I must refer.
I am the Major-domo; you the Chamber-groom;
But for the two of us I cannot find the room.
More ancient of the pair, I have, of course, the right
To judge between us; and, according to my light,
You must give way. To sit with you each day at mess,
And witness the huge appetite you must possess
For meat, and every kind of food, would ill agree

With my digestion; and, in fact, would probably
Unhinge me wholly — therefore as all competition
Between us is beyond the merest supposition,
Having the gout severely now and then, and being
By no means yet a fool — I say that, all this seeing —
As you are so attractive — yet not over-strong,
Because you faint — I say I cannot now be wrong
In killing you right off.

RUY BLAS.

You 're welcome — *if you can.*

DON GURITAN.

That, Count, I must confess, is spoken like a man.
And so precisely, as I think I said before,
To-morrow morning at the early hour of four
We meet, without a witness, in the lonely glen
To cut each other's throats, like gallant gentlemen.
[*He extends his hand, which* RUY BLAS *takes.*

RUY BLAS.

Of course, no word of this to any one?
[DON GURITAN *nods by way of assent.*
Farewell.
Until to-morrow. [*Exit* RUY BLAS.

DON GURITAN (*alone*).

Yes. His hand, e'en as it fell
Into my own, was firm. He certainly will die,
But he must be as brave — at least, as cool as I.
[*A key is turned in the lock of the door to* THE QUEEN'S *apartments.* GURITAN *turns round when he hears it.*
That door, I see, is opening.
[THE QUEEN *enters, and goes quickly up to* DON GURITAN, *who appears delighted to see her. She holds the box of relics in her hand.*

SCENE V.

DON GURITAN, THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN (*with a smile*).

Ha! Don Guritan.
I want you! —

DON GURITAN (*delighted*).

Then, indeed, I am a happy man! —

THE QUEEN (*placing the box on the table near to her*).

It is not much, my lord, from you that I require. [*Laughs.*
Casilda just now stated that, at my desire —
(You know what thoughtless beings all girls are) — that you
Would anything — no matter what its nature — do
If I but wished it.

DON GURITAN.

She was right.

THE QUEEN.

Well, by my faith,
I doubted it.

DON GURITAN.

Then, madame, you were wrong.

THE QUEEN.

To death,
She said, my champion you would be.

DON GURITAN.

Casilda spoke
As I myself would speak. Yes, may I straightway choke
If every word 's not true!

THE QUEEN.

Still, would not I the fact
Believe.

DON GURITAN.

Ah, let your Majesty tell me to act
In any way; then see, and judge.

THE QUEEN.

You mean it?

DON GURITAN.

Yes.

THE QUEEN.

Sure?

DON GURITAN.

Sure!

THE QUEEN.

Well, swear to me that you 'll do nothing less
Than what I will command you.

DON GURITAN.

By my Patron Saint,
Most venerated, I 'll do all, without restraint,
Your Majesty may will.

THE QUEEN.

So far, then, it is good.
This box that you behold, of scented sandal-wood,
You 'll bear to Neubourg, to my father, with all speed —
At once you 'll go!

DON GURITAN (*aside*).

I 'm caught. [*Aloud.*] But, madame, is there need
For instantly departing?

THE QUEEN.

Instantly, I say.

DON GURITAN.

Six hundred leagues! —

THE QUEEN.

Five hundred, Count, and fifty. Pray
Be careful with these lovely fringes. They might fade.
[*Pointing to the silken covering to the box.*

DON GURITAN.

And must I go? —

THE QUEEN.

At once.

DON GURITAN.

To-morrow —

THE QUEEN.

No — we 've made
Arrangements —

DON GURITAN (*aside*).

Yes, I 'm caught! [*Aloud.*] But —

THE QUEEN.

Go! —

DON GURITAN.

But —

THE QUEEN.

I 've your word.

DON GURITAN.

A small affair —

THE QUEEN.

Impossible! —

DON GURITAN.

Let me be heard! —

THE QUEEN.

Quick! —

DON GURITAN.

Just one day —

THE QUEEN.

No! —

DON GURITAN.

If I —

THE QUEEN.

Not one single hour!

DON GURITAN.

I —

THE QUEEN.

No! —

DON GURITAN.

But! —

THE QUEEN.

Go! —

DON GURITAN.

If —

THE QUEEN.

I will kiss you! —

[*Throws her arms round his neck and kisses him.*

DON GURITAN (*vexed and yet charmed*).

Oh, the power
Of that embrace! — Madame, I cannot choose but go.

THE QUEEN (*pointing to the window*).

A carriage waits you, Count, there, in the court below.

DON GURITAN (*aside*).

Whatever I may do, I sink beneath her level —
God became man, 't is true; but woman veils the devil!

She is prepared for all.

[*Writes hastily on a paper; rings, and gives it to a Page who enters.*

Page, hasten, as you live,
And to Don Cæsar de Bazan this missive give.

[*Exit Page.*

This duel must be fought on my return.

[*Aside; then aloud to* THE QUEEN.

I bow
To your commands.

THE QUEEN.

'T is well.

[DON GURITAN *takes the box from the table, kisses* THE QUEEN'S *hand, and goes out. Soon afterwards the sound of carriage wheels is heard in the courtyard below.* THE QUEEN *then falling into a fauteuil exclaims.*

He will not kill him now!

ACT III.

RUY BLAS.

Scene. — *A saloon in the King's Palace at Madrid, in which the Council of State holds its sittings. At the back are large double doors. A few steps lead up to them. In the angle on the left is a recess concealed by tapestry hangings, and at the back of the recess is a small door. On the right a window. Below it is a square table, covered with a green velvet cloth, on which are eight small desks Round the table are eight stools, and at the side facing the spectator is a large fauteuil or throne, covered with cloth of gold and surmounted by a drapery of the same material. The arms of Spain are emblazoned on it. At the side of this throne is a chair.*

As the curtain rises the members of the King's Privy Council are standing about in groups, previous to taking their places at the table.

SCENE I.

Don Manuel Arias, *President of Castile.* Don Pedro Velez de Guevarra, Count de Camporeal, *Councillor de cape et d' épée de la Contaduria, Mayor.* Don Fernando de Cordova Y. Aguilar, Marquis de Priego, *same rank.* Antonio Ubilla, *Writer, Mayor to the Revenue.* Montazgo, *Robed Councillor of the Chamber of the Indies.* Covadenga, *First Secretary of the Islands. Several other Councillors; some in black robes and others in Court dresses.* Camporeal *has the Star of Calatrava on his cloak;* Priego, *the collar of the Golden Fleece round his neck.*

Don Manuel Arias *and the* Count Camporeal *talk together in a low tone at the front of the stage. The others stand about in groups here and there.*

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

This sudden rise is somewhat of a mystery.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

It is, if one reflects on his past history.
His honours crowd upon him, and each day increase —
The last was the insignia of the Golden Fleece,
And Dukedom of Olmedo. Secretary, too —

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

All in six months!

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

There 's more in this than is to you
Or me apparent.

DON MANUEL ARIAS (*mysteriously*).

Yes — the Queen.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

The King, in truth
Grows feebler every day, since wasted was his youth.
He lives in the Escurial, like as in the tomb
With his first wife. The present Queen, in her fresh bloom,
Rules as she pleases —

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

Over *us*, my worthy sir —
But then the minister, Don Cæsar, rules o'er *her*.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

His mode of living is most strange. As to the Queen,
She and her minister are ne'er together seen.
One seems to shun the other. You 'll say, 't is not so;

But, as for six months I have watched them, I must know.
He 's of a disposition absent and morose,
And round about his solitary dwelling throws
A barrier of mystery. Its doors close shut;
Its windows closed and veiled; no living soul can put
A foot within. Yet more, — his servants are two blacks,
Both deaf and mute.

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

Mute, say you?

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

Yes; there nothing lacks
To make the mystery complete. It would appear
The other men attend upon his orders here.

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

All this is strange indeed.

ANTONIO UBILLA (*who has joined them*).

He 's of a noble race,
I hear.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

Stranger than all, — he 'd show an honest face!
[*To* ARIAS.] He 's cousin — Santa Cruz has also pushed him on —
To that same Marquis Sallust, only last year gone
With such a crash. But this same Cæsar, I am told,
Whom now as lord and master o'er us we behold,
A few years back was such a thoughtless, crack-brained loon
That those who knew him deemed him smitten by the moon!
His gold, his jewels, — all his substance scattered he
In wine, in women, and the wildest revelry.

Then, all at once he fell; and disappeared from sight,
E'en as the meteor from the wondering eye at night.

DON MANUEL ARIAS.

Years have, however, changed the fool into a sage.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL.

Loose women ever grow quite prudish in old age.

ANTONIO UBILLA.

I do believe him honest.

COUNT DE CAMPOREAL (*laughing*).

Candidly you do,
Ubilla? Are you one of those so dazzled too?
[*Mysteriously.*
Stay now, and let me make a trifling calculation:
The household of her Majesty — drawn from the nation —
Costs every year in golden ducats, bright and new,
Six hundred, sixty and four thousand, with a few
Still over and above. Now here 's an open sea
In which, I say, a clever fisherman is free
To cast a net.

MARQUIS DE PRIEGO (*joining them*).

Your pardon, but to me it seems
Your talk is much too free, and e'en upon it gleams
A moon-ray of imprudence. If you think it fit
"To bite the King, you first must kiss the favourite."
Thus said my grandsire once: so now my lords, with leave,
We 'll our attention to the public business give.
[*All place themselves at the table, and begin taking up pens and turning over papers, but in a careless and indifferent manner.*

MONTAZGO (*aside to* UBILLA).

Out of that relic money, if you recollect,
I asked that you would very privately direct
Payment into my nephew's hands for his lost post.

UBILLA (*aside to* MONTAZGO).

You promised me that in a few days, at the most,
My cousin Melchior should be Bailie of Ebro.

MONTAZGO (*aside*).

We 've just endowed your daughter richly, as you know.
These applications are incessant.

UBILLA (*aside*).

Well, I 'll make
Your nephew's matter right.

MONTAZGO.

And you may therefore take
The Bailieship for Melchior. [*They shake hands.*

COVADENGA (*rising*).

Lords and Gentlemen;
Members of this most noble Council. Hear me when
I state the duties grave that we must here fulfil
With all our best ability and ready will.
The revenue of Spain, now in a hundred hands,
A crying grievance is, and therefore it commands
Our strict attention. Yes, 't is time we made an end
Of such a state of things. I say we should not lend
Ourselves to such abuses: giving to a few
Too much; giving others little. Ubilla, to you
The taxes on tobacco yield great gain. Priego,
You reap a wondrous harvest on your indigo.
Camporeal, on salt, on amber, and on jet,
And divers other articles your hand is set.

[*To* MONTAZGO.] You look upon me, lord, with most unquiet eyes;
Need what I now am stating fill you with surprise?
Yes, true it is that by your dexterous management
From fines, lead, rosewood, arsenic, you receive a rent:
Yet these few I have mentioned are not nearly all;
I 've nothing, — so to my share let a little fall.

CAMPOREAL (*laughing heartily*).

Oh, sly old devil! — he 's best off, upon my soul!
For of two islands he has got entire control.
He holds Majorca with one talon, sharp and stiff;
The other sticks into the Peak of Teneriffe.

COVADENGA (*excitedly*).

I say, I 've nothing!

PRIEGO (*laughing*).

You have negroes!

[*All rise and talk querulously together at same time.*

MONTAZGO.

I think I
Have most right to complain, and fancy much to try
My fortune in some forests.

COVADENGA.

I 'll give negroes up;
Give me the arsenic!

[RUY BLAS *has entered unperceived, by the door at the back, and has heard the concluding altercation. He is dressed in black velvet with a scarlet mantle; a white plume in his cap, and the collar of the Golden Fleece round his neck. He listens for a few moments, and then advances into the midst of the Ministers in the height of their quarrel.*

SCENE II.

The same, RUY BLAS.

RUY BLAS (*looking round*).

Gentlemen, methinks you sup
With wondrous appetites!
[*Commotion among the Councillors, who all turn and pause in surprise and anxiety.* RUY BLAS *puts on his hat, folds his arms, and continues.*
O faithless Ministers!
In whom, alas! scarce one redeeming virtue stirs!
Is this the way in which your duty, then, is done?
You rob the house above you! Can you not be won
By shame from such a purpose? — Yes, you choose the hour
In which Spain totters on her lofty height of power!
Though bitter tears she sheds, you callously behold,
Intent upon one aim, — to gorge yourselves with gold!
The edifice may crack — may crumble — so you say;
Your coffers once well filled, you can but haste away!
By me, then, be denounced, ye robbers of the tomb
In which your country lies — too early is her doom!
Again, I say, look round you; feel some little shame!
Spain yet hath virtue left, and an illustrious name!
Must both now perish? Yes, since the fourth Philip's death
Brazil and Portugal, which once were great beneath
Our sway, with Brisach in Alsatia; and again
Roussillon, Ormuz, Goa, five thousand leagues of main,
And Pernambuco, the Blue Mountains, — all are gone
O'er which the once protecting shield of Spain was thrown!

E'en from the boisterous north, to south and east and
west,
Europe, that hates us, calls our sovereignty a jest,
Our King a phantom Monarch! — England and Holland,
both,
The empire would divide: and Rome is nothing loath
To gull us: and in Piedmont — friendly though she is —
To risk an army's safety might be much amiss.
Savoy is full of dangers; France but bides her hour,
And Austria watches. Then Bavaria's infant power
Is dying, as you know. As for the Viceroys — there
Medina, with love-scandals, fills his Naples fair.
Vaudemont sells Milan; Leganez has Flanders lost —
What remedy? for indigence now chills us, like a frost.
The State, of money and of troops around us drained,
Where once prosperity in its full glory reigned.
Upon the seas high Heaven her rising wrath has shown;
And to three hundred vessels wrecked we now must own.
Yet you presume — my lords, reflect! — in twenty years
The people ('t is no fancy, great as it appears,
Bearing upon their backs the too enormous charge
Of your most guilty pleasures, and which still enlarge
Upon them), — this down-trodden people, have out-doled,
Thus pressed, four hundred millions of their hard-earned
gold!
And yet 't is not enough! For you I shrink with
shame!
About the country bands of men, without a name,
Roam in wild freedom, and around their sanguine track
Is desolation, murder, — ruins, still smouldering black,
Of many a homestead fair. By many a bush and bower
Gleams the lone cross, mark of the vile assassin's power.
As though 't were not sufficient Prince 'gainst Prince
should war;
E'en convents must pick quarrels; provinces must jar:—

Each petty hand is raised against his neighbour's life,
And the whole country teems with sanguinary strife! —
The Church itself is tottering on the very brink
Of threat'ning ruin; and from its once-loved portals shrink
Not few that worshipped there. Intrigue is paramount.
And loyalty is sapped, yea, at its very fount!
Spain open lies, e'en like a foul and reeking sewer,
And into it all nations pour what 's most impure.
Each Noble has his wage; and greedily his hand
To those is stretched who can base services command,
No matter in what tongue! — Babel reigns in Madrid!
And Genoese, Sardinians, Flemings, all can bid! —
The Alguazil, e'er to the poor man hard and stern,
Does to the wealthy one with smiles obsequious turn.
Upon Toledo Bridge I have been robbed myself;
And one half of Madrid looks for the other's pelf.
Our Judges can be bribed. Our soldiers, who once hurled
Spain's mighty thunderbolts, and vanquished half the world,
Are all unpaid. Six thousand meagre, half-starved men,
Jews, mountaineers and vagabonds, from every den
Of infamy, strut in their ranks, and wear a sword
And knife; which, when night's friendly shelter doth afford
The welcome chance, transforms each soldier to a thief,
And havoc is abroad! Matalobos, the chief
Of brigands, boasts more men than could a Duke or Prince.
A robber wars upon the King! and few evince
Respect for him, alas! The peasants e'en insult
His passing carriage; and the now untoward result
Is manifest in your fear-stricken, mourning King,
Who, in his palace shut, can hear the death-knell ring

Of what was once a mighty empire! Listen ye
Who calmly sit, and all this broadcast ruin see —
Crushed is the Lion! Europe bruises with its heel
The prostrate giant, — him who once was clothed in steel,
And robed in purple, but whose rags now barely hide
The gaping wounds that bleed, and show on every side!
I say, this fall accomplished, I behold ye still
Disputing o'er the remnants with an eager will!
Wake, Charles the Fifth! thou mighty conqueror, awake!
Spain calls aloud on *thee* thy deep repose to break! —
What dost thou in the tomb? when into pieces falls
The towering fabric of thy greatness! — Yes, Spain calls
Aloud for aid! This empire, reared by thine own hands,
Sinks fast, and on the verge of dissolution stands!
That all resplendent globe, that erst was held by thee —
Fit emblem of thy far extending sovereignty —
And in thy left hand shone so that the world believed
That from Madrid the rising sunlight they received,
Now like a fading star, or waning moon, is seen
That o'er the shaded earth doth feebly, faintly lean.
Alas! thy proud inheritance is wasting fast,
And, melted into gold, into base hands is cast!
Thy splendours tarnishing, O giant! canst thou sleep,
And see deformèd dwarfs around thy sceptre creep
To break it into pieces; and that mighty bird —
Thine eagle dread, of whom the world so oft hath heard,
When on its conquering way 'mid flames and thunders dire —
Plumeless, sink into what is now a funeral pyre!

[*The Councillors remain silent in consternation. The* MARQUIS DE PRIEGO *and the* COUNT DE CAMPOREAL *alone raise their heads, and wrathfully regard* RUY BLAS. CAMPOREAL *at length whispers to* PRIEGO; *goes up to the table, writes a few hasty lines on a sheet of paper, which he and the* MARQUIS *sign.*

CAMPOREAL (*giving the paper to* RUY BLAS).

Lord Duke, our resignation in your hands I place.

RUY BLAS.

I thank your Lordship. To the cradle of your race
In old Castile you will retire. Lord Marquis, you
To Andalusia will proceed to-morrow, too.

[*The two Lords proudly retire, having first put on their hats.* RUY BLAS *then turns, and addresses those who remain.*

Each one who sees not fit to follow in my path,
To take the course he 's chosen full permission hath.

[*A pause.* RUY BLAS *seats himself in the chair beside the throne, and busies himself with the correspondence, opening letters, etc. Whilst he is thus occupied,* COVADENGA, ARIAS, *and* UBILLA *talk together in an undertone.*

UBILLA (*to* COVADENGA, *indicating* RUY BLAS).

We have our master here. This man will yet be great.

ARIAS.

If he has time to be so.

COVADENGA.

Yes; and time to wait.
He might be Richelieu.

ARIAS.

Or Olivarez!—

RUY BLAS (*after reading a letter, aloud*).

Hum!
A plot! The perils I foresaw, then, thus are come
To pass! Listen, my lords! [*Reads.*] "Duke of Olmedo,
keep

Your ears and eyes wide open. Should you chance to sleep
A lofty personage will vanish from Madrid."
Aha! so far, then, I will do as I am bid,
And keep a watch. The letter is anonymous.

[*A* HUISSIER *approaches* RUY BLAS *with a low bow.*
What now?

HUISSIER.

The Ambassador of France waits to discuss
Some matters with your Grace.

RUY BLAS.

Ha! — D'Harcourt — tell him soon;
I'm occupied at present.

HUISSIER (*again bowing*).

In the grand saloon
The imperial Nuncio waits your Excellency's pleasure.

RUY BLAS.

Tell him it is impossible; I'm not at leisure.

[HUISSIER *bows, and retires.* *A* PAGE, *in scarlet livery with silver braiding, enters and approaches* RUY BLAS.

My faithful Page, tell all who chance to ask for me
I am not visible.

PAGE.

There's one who fain would see
Your Grace: Don Guritan, returned from Neubourg.

RUY BLAS.

So! —
Don Guritan returned! — You'll tell him how to go
Up to my private house, to-morrow, my good Page.
Retire. [*Exit* PAGE. RUY BLAS *to the Councillors.*

Ruy Blas in the Privy Council Chamber.

Grave matters our attention will engage:
Seek me within two hours, my lords.

[*All retire, bowing profoundly to* RUY BLAS: *When alone, he walks forward plunged in a deep reverie. Suddenly at the angle of the saloon the tapestry is pushed aside, and* THE QUEEN *appears at the opening. A joyful expression lights up her countenance. She is dressed in a white robe, and the crown is upon her head.* RUY BLAS *turns, and seems petrified by this apparition.*

SCENE III.

RUY BLAS, THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN (*at the back*).

Oh, thanks!

RUY BLAS (*starting*).

The Queen!

THE QUEEN.

I could no longer, Duke, remain behind this screen.
Your noble, loyal speech, my grateful thanks command,
And warmly must I grasp that truly faithful hand!

[*Walks hastily up to him, and takes his hand before he can prevent it.*

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

For six months I 've avoided her — and now to fall
Across her thus! — madame — you there?

THE QUEEN.

Yes; I heard all.
With my whole soul I listened!

RUY BLAS.

Ne'er did I suspect
Your presence in there, madame.

THE QUEEN.

No one would expect
A listener, Duke. That Privy Councils might be heard
Unseen by him, the late King Philip (known as third)
Had the nook made. The present King has, too, been there,
And listening, he has heard his treacherous Council share
His plundered States between them.

RUY BLAS.

Did he nothing say?

THE QUEEN.

No, nothing.

RUY BLAS.

Nothing do?

THE QUEEN.

No; but he turned away
And mournfully resumed his hunting. Ah, to-day
You treated those false men as richly they deserved;
Grandly you spoke; and, when I peeped, I well observed
The flashing lightning of your eyes upon them turned
As the fast flowing words the shrinking traitors burned.
Whence comes this wondrous knowledge of effect and cause
That shines in your discourse? Kings could not lay down laws
With more convincing argument: — not Gods above
Appear more terrible! —

RUY BLAS.

It springs alone from love, —
Love of your matchless self. The ruin that they call
Down on the State, I know, I feel, must also fall
Upon your head. Yes; to avert destruction hurled
Against you, in my ardour I would save the world!
I am a wretched man, whose deep-felt love for you
Has become soul-absorbing. With each day it grew;
And now, e'en as the blind for glowing sunlight pine,
I yearn, I crave, for what, alas! can ne'er be mine.
Oh, listen, madame! I have had the brightest dreams
E'en in my depth of darkness; and their cheering beams
Consoled me from afar. I dared not e'en to place
My finger near to yours, but I could see your face
Dazzle me, like an angel's! — I have suffered long,
And for six months have stifled with an effort strong
The flame that burned within. — I shunned you everywhere,
For it was pain to me to breathe the self-same air
And yet not speak. Oh, madame, dare I now give vent
To that so long within my tortured bosom pent?
Dare I my passion to your Majesty confess?
Tell me to die, and both the hour and hand I 'll bless
That dooms me! Die! — Fear chills my heart. —
Oh, pardon me!

THE QUEEN.

With ravishment I hear, with ravishment I see!
No, never yet such words have sounded in my ears;
Thy soul is thrilling in thy voice, and me it bears
Joyfully with it! Yes, I long to hear thy voice,
To see thine eyes so eloquently say, "Rejoice!" —
But I have suffered also; six months past have been
Torture itself — because you shunned me, — me, your queen! —
Oh, I have said too much!

RUY BLAS.

Nay, graciously give breath
To more enchanting words!

THE QUEEN (*after a struggle*).

Yes, though it be e'en death
To my torn heart, I must tell all! [*With upraised eyes.*
Oh, is 't a crime
Thus to unfold the truth one would conceal? Long time —
That long six months — you fled from me, and I pursued.
Each day within that secret cabinet I stood
And listened anxiously to catch the calm, full flow
Of your tongue's eloquence. And how my heart would glow
With pride at those wise words; I recognized the ring
Of the true metal there that constitutes a king, —
A master over men! Yes, truly it is I
Who placed you where you are, who bade you climb thus high!
Heaven failed to raise you, but it is a woman's hand
That leads to where a king should rule the troubled land.
Ah, aught that touches *me* receives at once thy care, —
A flower before, now empire claims those talents rare.
I saw thee simply good, and now I see thee great.
Just Heaven! if I've done wrong, full bitter is my fate
To be thus here immured, as though 't were in a tomb,
Without or love or hope, — such is my present doom.
One day, if circumstance so favours, and the spot,
I'll tell thee how I've suffered, how I'm left, forgot, —
Humiliated too, at every turn. Judge, then.
But yesterday my chamber was displeasing: when
I sought to change it, I was insolently told
I could not do so! Yes, in me a slave behold.
Such are the bolts and bars of courtly etiquette

Ruy Blas on his Knees before the Queen.

Surrounding me. Yes, Duke, 't is Heaven, I feel, has set
Thee here to save the State that trembles on the brink
Of ruin, — the people, too, oppressed. Thou wilt not shrink
From this great task, but thou wilt aid, and love me too, —
Me, miserable — suffering —

RUY BLAS (*falling on his knees*).

Madame —

THE QUEEN (*gravely*).

To you
I give my soul. Queen though I be o'er all the rest,
It is a *woman's* heart that throbs within my breast.
Yes, Duke, I 'm yours. My faith in you is great and strong,
And tells me that my honour cannot suffer wrong.
Call me, and I will come. O Cæsar! in this brain
True genius sits enthroned, and nobly doth she reign.
Adieu!

[*Kisses his forehead : returns to the recess and exit.*

SCENE IV.

RUY BLAS, *alone.*

RUY BLAS (*rising from his knees wrapped in ecstatic contemplation*).

Yes, Heaven seems opening wide before my eyes!
The first hour of my life is *now*. There doth arise
Around me such a flood of pure and glorious light, —
Like views of paradise, intolerably bright,

We sometimes see in visions. Joy — yea, ecstasy —
Commingling with high pride, give a divinity
To every feeling, and proclaim it pure, true love,
Such as is ever flowing in the realms above!
To be belov'd of her, — the Queen! 'T is true — yes! yes!
I 'm greater than the king, for she must love him less
Than she loves me. The thought is dazzling! Vanquisher
Of Spain, Duke of Olmedo, and the heart of her
Who reigns, — that angel who has made me more than man!
Do I move, living, since this star-lit dream began?
It is indeed no dream. She spoke the rapturous word;
'T was plainly spoken, and as plainly was it heard.
I saw her there. Upon her head the diadem,
Small, flashing (as she spoke) with variegated gem,
Caught my eye; and the chiselled bracelet on her wrist,
I saw that too. She trusts to me! Could I resist
That one appeal? Sweet angel! Heaven, it is said,
Gave love to man in order that he might be led
To be both great and gentle. I, who now shall fear —
Dowered with her affection — nothing far or near;
I, who by her assistance, am in all supreme;
I, who, heart-proud, would scarce a monarch's power deem
Equal to mine, — before high Heaven I here declare
That my sweet Queen in loyal safety I will bear
Through every danger that may threaten. Let her lean
As *woman* on my breast, and on my arm as *Queen!*
Yes, let her every lingering fear or doubt allay;
My love, and my devotion, are her own.

[*Some moments ago a man has entered by the door at the back, enveloped in a long cloak, and wearing a hat garnished with silver ornaments. He has slowly walked*

up to RUY BLAS *without being seen by him, and at the moment that he in ecstasy raises his eyes to heaven, the man suddenly places his hand on* RUY BLAS'S *shoulder, who turns as if just awakened. The man then drops his cloak and* DON SALLUST *is revealed. He is dressed in the same kind of scarlet livery as that worn by the Page who attends on* RUY BLAS.

SCENE V.

RUY BLAS, DON SALLUST.

DON SALLUST (*his hand on* RUY BLAS'S *shoulder*).

Good-day.

RUY BLAS (*aside, astonished*).

Great heaven! I am lost! the Marquis!

DON SALLUST (*smiling*).

Ha! I'll bet
It was not in your thoughts to see me here just yet.

RUY BLAS.

Your lordship has in truth surprised me. [*Aside.*
Woe and fears
Return. The angel gone — the demon reappears!
[*Goes hastily to cabinet in recess, bolts the door behind the tapestry, and tremblingly returns to* DON SALLUST.

DON SALLUST.

Well, and how fare you?

RUY BLAS (*greatly agitated, with eyes fixed upon* SALLUST).

My good lord — that livery —

DON SALLUST (*in a cold, hard tone; still smiling*).

I had to pass in through the palace gates, you see;
And with this habit on, one 's free in here to roam.
Besides, it 's to my taste; in it I feel at home.

[*Puts on his hat; but* RUY BLAS *remains, as before, bare-headed.*

RUY BLAS.

I fear for you —

DON SALLUST.

Fear, do you? That 's a silly word.

RUY BLAS.

You are an exile! —

DON SALLUST.

Well — but fear is quite absurd.

RUY BLAS.

Should you be recognized by daylight in the palace —

DON SALLUST.

Court gallants, 't is well known, are careless, light, and callous
Of all but their own pleasure. Would they stir one pace,
Think you, to stare into a passing stranger's face?
Especially that of a lackey?

[*Sits in a chair;* RUY BLAS *still standing.*

Apropos,
What 's doing in Madrid? Of course, I 'd like to know.
Is 't true that, burning with an hyperbolic zeal
For that fine article that 's called "the public weal,"
You 've exiled dear Priego? Can you have forgot
He is your own relation? You remember not
His mother was a Sandoval? —yours too? The devil!
In the result of this there may arise much evil.

You should be careful, friend. The wolf that yearns to sup,
Considers ere he eats his wolfish brother up.
It was ill done.

RUY BLAS (*somewhat reassured*).

Nay, if your lordship will permit,
The facts for special notice I can now submit: —
That Don Priego, as a noble of the King,
Sought to increase expenditure, — a most wrong thing;
For early we must put an army in the field,
Though short of money: then Bavaria's fate is sealed,
Or will be soon. But yesterday Count Harrach, he
You know full well, in confidence —

DON SALLUST.

It seems to me
The air is cold. Oblige, and close the window, sir.

[RUY BLAS, *pale with shame and despair, hesitates a moment; then, with an effort, goes slowly to the window, which he closes.* DON SALLUST, *still seated, watches him with a careless air.*

RUY BLAS (*resuming and endeavouring to convince* SALLUST).

From what I 've told your lordship, you will now infer
That war would be disastrous with our funds thus low.
With empty coffers, what are we to do? You know
That in our hands our country's welfare solely rests,
And therefore that one hope should stir within our breasts —

DON SALLUST (*interrupting, and pointing to his handkerchief which had fallen on the floor when he entered*).

Excuse me, but my handkerchief lies there.

[RUY BLAS, *apparently tortured by his feelings, again hesitates, but at last stoops, picks it up, and gives it to* SALLUST, *who puts it into his pocket.*

You said —

RUY BLAS (*with effort*).

That shortly into war the nation might be led.
She must be rescued: this, our great and noble Spain
Should not before her rulers plead for aid in vain.
Let us awaken then, and undertake the task,
Intrigue condemn, and from all traitors tear the mask!

DON SALLUST (*with an indifferent air*).

Now, this is not the path to walk upon at all.
Your language, whilst pedantic, argues genius small.
Why make so great a stir, — ay, such a furious clatter
O'er what is, after all, a very simple matter?
Suppose a dirty million 's more than half devoured?
To make a mischief of it *you* are not empowered.
Lords are not peasants, and must live e'en as they please, —
Freely and largely, as becomes the high degrees
They hold. 'T is fine to talk about abuses thus;
But to become redresser is ridiculous.
To be forever boiling o'er with virtuous rage
Is simply monstrous, and unsuited to your age.
You would be popular, perchance, among the cits, —
The drapers, hosiers — bah! I say employ your wits
To better purpose. Seek some fresh and new caprice
That will command attention, and your gains increase.
The public interest! Think of your own, I say.
About Spain's safety all your kindly fears allay;
And as for virtue, faith, integrity, — they are
About the same as when great Charles the Fifth made war.
You were not born a fool; so, by your leave, I 'll cure
This pathos, which is somewhat painful to endure;

'T is like the paper bag a child fills up with care,
To burst with loud report, and rush of empty air.

RUY BLAS.

And yet, my lord —

DON SALLUST (*with a cold smile*).

You really are astonishing!
I would converse upon a far more serious thing.
[*In a dry, imperious tone of voice.*
To-morrow morning here you 'll all your service waive,
And wait me at the house that to your care I gave.
The business I 've in hand has almost touched its end,
So mind the mutes alone to orders do attend.
Within the garden, and beneath its deepest shade,
Arrangements for a carriage must with care be made,
Horsed for a journey. See to this. Gold I 'll provide.

RUY BLAS.

My lord, your wishes shall in nothing be denied.
But swear to me, beforehand, that in this affair
The Queen is not concerned?

DON SALLUST (*who is playing on the table with an ivory paper-knife, suddenly turns to him*).

What need have you to care?

RUY BLAS (*trembling, and gazing on him with fear*).

Oh, fearful, dangerous man! Why must *you* thus command?
I feel myself dragged onward by an iron hand!
And a gulf yawns invisible, intensely dark
Before me! Some black project 's here! Have you no spark
Of pity left for me? Perchance you know it not —
I love this woman!

DON SALLUST (*coldly*).

Well — perhaps I knew it.

RUY BLAS.

What!
You knew it?

DON SALLUST.

After all, what does it signify?

RUY BLAS (*leaning against the wall for support, and speaking as it were to himself*).

What does it signify? Oh, nothing — nothing. I
Am but the victim of a torture worse than death!
That I should be a witness, e'en with my last breath,
To such a foul adventure! Spare me, Heaven! Spare
Mine eyes the sight!

DON SALLUST.

Eh? Well, is it so hard to bear?
I think you must be raving. Really, my young master,
You do your best to make of this a great disaster.
I have an end in view which I alone must know, —
A happy one for you, as time will amply show.
This I have told you. I advance. If you obey,
To certain happiness you are upon the way.
And, after all, what are Love's temporary woes? —
Ephemora, which everybody tastes and knows.
Learn that there is the question of an empire here;
Then what comparison can private feelings bear?
I could tell all I know; but what might be the good,
If I must ever be by you misunderstood.
Show your good sense in so far that you comprehend
Your status as a lackey. If I 'm not a friend,
I 'm a kind master; and I must be also free
To use my servant as may suit my fantasy.

You I transformed into a temporary lord
Because a certain service you could me afford.
That once performed — deem it a doom or not a doom —
Your lackey's livery you once more reassume,
Should I so will. If you have gained the sovereign's heart,
You have obeyed instructions, and have done your part.
I 'm satisfied. Be reasonable, be content.

RUY BLAS (*who has listened as if unable to believe his ears*).
Just Heaven! for what crime is this the chastisement?
What have I done, O Father, ever great and pure,
That all this depth of misery I must endure?
Involuntarily must then my eyes behold
That victim innocent in agony untold?
My lord, you plunge me deep into a black abyss, —
For your relentless course amounts indeed to this, —
And all for what? — To satisfy a vengeance dire!
[*Speaking to himself.*
Yes, 't is revenge alone that can his acts inspire, —
Revenge against the Queen! Oh, cruel fate! And must
I, in her eyes, become an object of disgust, —
A vagabond, a villain with a double face,
A perjured hound, dishonouring both name and race?
I shall go mad! With thickening horrors thus surrounded,
Reason seems tottering — is clouded and confounded.
[*He pauses, and then goes on dreamily.*
O Heaven! can it be that such foul things are done?
Construct what will not bear the fierce light of the sun
Upon it. Arm it with innumerable wheels
To crush and grind out that which every being feels
Is the heart's life-blood! Throw a livery over it;
Set it in motion; and then watch as bit by bit

The mangled shreds appear, all splashed with blood and dirt,
Yet shiver not, — 't was but a groom the livery girt!
[*Turning again to* SALLUST.
But still there 's time! Lord, feel some little pity yet!
Before the cruel wheels are in full motion set!
[*Throwing himself at* SALLUST'S *feet.*
Take pity now on me! Take pity, too, on her!
I 'm faithful, as you know. I 'll serve without demur —
But take compassion on us!

DON SALLUST.

Really, this man never
Will comprehend, but thus seems doomed to plague me ever.
This is most wearisome!

RUY BLAS.

My lord —

DON SALLUST.

Enough, sir! Tut!
[*Rises and walks to the window.*
'T is very clear this window was not closely shut.
I feel there is a draught.
[*Examines window and pulls it closer.*

RUY BLAS (*aside, rising*).

I will not longer strain
My power of endurance. [*Aloud.*] I 'm a grandee of Spain,
Duke of Olmedo. From beneath the crushing tread
Of your too haughty foot, I proudly raise my head!

DON SALLUST.

What did you say? Repeat that very lofty phrase!
Ruy Blas, Duke of Olmedo? You would proudly raise
Your head? There is a bandage o'er your eyes, good man;
Olmedo was conferred on Cæsar of Bazan!

RUY BLAS.

I will arrest you!

DON SALLUST.

Straightway then will I disclose
Your real character.

RUY BLAS.

But —

DON SALLUST.

If to the world it goes,
The bubble bursts! I've weighed, I've calculated all
The chances; so now judge which of our heads must fall.
You triumph just too early.

RUY BLAS.

I'll deny the whole!

DON SALLUST.

Come, this is childish!

RUY BLAS.

You've no proof!

DON SALLUST.

I can unroll
One that will quite suffice. Your memory is short,
Or you would not be quite so ready to retort

As you are now. You are the glove. I am the hand.
[*In a lower voice, and approaching nearer to him.*
If you obey me not, — please plainly understand, —
And are not at the house, prepared to fully aid
In what takes place ; if by your lips there is betrayed
A syllable that its success might compromise, —
She, for whose sake your fears are now so quick to rise,
Shall be forever lost, and publicly defamed
When once your origin to all the world is named.
A certain paper, too, that under lock and key
I keep securely by me, she shall straightway see.
When that was written you must plainly recollect,
And how the same was signed, if you will just reflect.
The wording of it is as follows : — " I, Ruy Blas,
The lackey to Monseigneur, Marquis of Finlas,
Will faithfully, on all occasions, at command,
Obey his orders. Witness here, this day, my hand."

RUY BLAS (*overcome, in a half-stifled voice*).
I 'll do your will, my lord, without word or rebuke.
[*The door at the back opens, and Councillors slowly file in.*

DON SALLUST (*hastily wrapping his cloak round him*).
Footsteps approach. [*Bowing profoundly.*
I am your humble servant, Duke.

ACT IV.

RUY BLAS.

SCENE.— *A small chamber sumptuous and sombre. Fixtures and furniture old-fashioned and gilded, but faded. The walls are covered with crimson velvet hangings, likewise old and faded. Behind the fauteuils run verticle bands of gold lace. At the back are folding doors. On the left a large sculptured fireplace of the time of Philip II. with escutcheons at the back. On the opposite side, in a recess, a little door leading into a dark cabinet. A single window on the left, placed very high up, barred and crossed-barred, as in a prison. On the walls are some old and smoke-begrimed portraits which are scarcely visible from the dirt, etc., upon them. A wardrobe chest with a Venetian mirror. Large fauteuils of the time of Philip III. A richly ornamented cupboard against the wall. A small round table with gilded claws, in one corner. It is morning.*

As the curtain rises, RUY BLAS, *dressed in black, without a cloak, and without the collar of the Golden Fleece, walks up and down in an agitated manner. At the back stands his* PAGE *motionless, and apparently awaiting his orders.*

SCENE I.

RUY BLAS, THE PAGE.

RUY BLAS (*aside and to himself*).

She must be saved from him! No matter what befall, —
Ay, even if my brains should stain the very wall!
If the foul gibbet owned me, e'en if hell should gape,
She *must* be saved! Alas! how can I hope to shape
My plans so that success is sure. My heart — my blood —
My soul! I'd give them all, could they but work her good!

But, then, this plot — how thwart it? That's the problem now!
Reflect — reflect — how that remorseless man could sow
The baneful seeds that grow and ripen into fruit.
He comes, he disappears, and will again pollute
The air with his most hateful presence. When I think
That prayerfully for her I did before him sink,
I deem myself a grovelling coward! After all,
What is he but a bold, bad man? When I recall
His words, the end he has in view quite plain appears:
To seize his prey, — the Queen! — and work upon her fears,
Then hand her broken-hearted, powerless, to his groom!
This is the aim; but can it, shall it be her doom?
Yet I who caused her fall, must save her, be the price
However weighty, — yea, my life! if 't will suffice;
She must be saved! And how will that arch-traitor gain
His most pernicious ends? How will he here obtain
Admission? By what unthought, secret trap or door
Will he glide in, and tread, perchance, this very floor?
He 's master of the house, as over me: the keys
Are in his hands, to use whenever he may please
To come, or go — whether it be by day or night —
And trample on my heart, and crush almost the light
Of reason from my brain. Oh, yes; I must be mad!
By passion's whirlwind seized, — now cheered awhile; now sad
E'en to despair! My reason, like the oak-tree, bends
Almost to breaking 'neath the sweeping blast that rends
And fiercely scatters! Let me ponder well once more.
She must not leave the palace. If she passes o'er
The threshold, all is lost! 'T is here the trap is laid, —
Laid to ensnare her! Oh, around all 's dark, — all made
As treacherous as art can make it. She must not
By any means approach this truly hateful spot, —

Not even leave the palace. Warning I must send
At once to her: but how?
[*He pauses in painful thought: then, as if an idea had suddenly struck him with a ray of hope, he raises his head.*
Yes — yes! he will befriend
The Queen! — Don Guritan! He is a loyal man;
He loves her too.
[*Makes a sign to the* PAGE, *who approaches.*
Go, Page, with all the speed you can.
And seek Don Guritan. Beg him he will excuse
The trouble I am giving, but that he will use
Instant despatch to see the Queen, and in my name,
As in his own (our interest is in this the same),
Implore her not to leave the palace for three days,
Howe'er she may be urged by others. Fly! Delays
Must not be dreamt of. [*Recalling* PAGE *who was going.*
Stay! [*Writes on his tablets hastily.*
Be sure you give him this:
"Believe, Don Guritan; and take it not amiss."
[*Folds the paper, and gives it to the* PAGE.
As to this duel, tell him I confess I'm wrong —
I'm at his feet; but that just now my troubles throng
So fast upon me that I am o'erwhelm'd. Beseech
That with her Majesty he will have instant speech,
As she's in utmost peril. Pray her not to move
For full three days. Now get thee hence, and straightway prove
Thou hast discretion in thee.

PAGE.
Trust me; your command
I duly will fulfil.

RUY BLAS.
You fully understand
That which you have to do?

PAGE.

Ay, truly, my good lord,
E'en to the letter. [*Exit* PAGE *hurriedly.*

RUY BLAS (*sinking into a fauteuil*).

Yes; his mission doth afford
To my excited, o'erwrought mind some slight repose.
And yet to calmness vainly could I now compose
My flickering spirits. Ah, I 've ta'en the only course
That 's possible. Don Guritan — Now what resource
Is left to me? To wait Don Sallust? Why? No — no —
'T will paralyze him for one day at least — I 'll go,
And in some church will pray that Heaven may inspire
A way through this deep gloom.

[*He rises; takes his hat, which is near at hand, and rings a small bell which is upon the table. Two Negroes, dressed in light green velvet, with jackets of the same embroidered with gold, appear at the door at the back.*

From hence I now retire.
A man may shortly come, by some way to him known,
And you will act as if the house were all his own.
Do as he orders; and if others follow —

[*Hesitates a moment.*

Why,
Let them do likewise as they please.

[*On a sign which he makes, the Negroes retire, after bowing in token of obedience to his wishes.* RUY BLAS *goes out, and as the door closes behind him, a great uproar is heard in the large chimney, from which a man suddenly falls enveloped in a large ragged cloak. It is* DON CÆSAR DE BAZAN.

SCENE II.

DON CÆSAR (*out of breath, giddy, astonished, and with an expression of jollity and yet anxiety*).

Quite true! 'T is I!

[*Having fallen on his hands and knees, he rises, rubbing his right knee, bowing very low, and advancing into the room.*

I beg your pardon. Pray don't notice the intrusion.
I hope, indeed, I have not caused the least confusion
By my abrupt arrival. I should really grieve —

[*Reaches the middle of the room, and then perceives that he is alone in it.*

There 's no one here who can a gentleman receive!
And yet, when to the tiles I made my upward climb
I thought I heard some voices. Humph! 'tis well; meantime
A little solitude is pleasing.

[*Throws himself into a fauteuil.*

Well, it seems
Events are thickening. I am like a dog that streams
After his bath, and shakes himself; astonishment
Half blinds me. First of all, those Alguazils were sent
To seize and ship me off; then followed the corsairs,
Whose stripes, in yon big town, methinks my back still bears:
And then the yellow woman who my virtue tried;
Then my escape, and then my journeys far and wide,
And my return to Spain. The very day I land
I find by Alguazils that I 'm still in demand;
Another headlong flight. I jump a wall. A tree
I climb, near to a lonely house; I then make free
To seek, unseen, its roof. With gratitude next swelling

I roughly sink into the bosom of the dwelling,
E'en by the chimney's aid! It scarce my tumble broke,
And has too roughly tampered with my last new cloak!
That Sallust is a most unmitigated brute.
[*Rises and examines himself in the mirror of the wardrobe.*
My doublet, likewise, suffered by that chimney shoot.
[*Takes off his cloak and examines his rose-coloured satin doublet, which is torn and patched in several places. He then suddenly rubs his knee again, at the same time looking towards the fireplace.*
My leg most devilishly reminds me of that fall!
[*He opens a drawer in the wardrobe, and in it finds a green velvet cloak embroidered with gold, which is the one given by* SALLUST *to* RUY BLAS.
This cloak appears to me the better, after all.
[*Throws the cloak over his shoulders, and puts his ragged one in the drawer, after folding it carefully. He puts his hat in also, which he forces down with a blow of his fist, and shuts the drawer. He then walks proudly about in his new cloak.*
All right; I 'm clothed anew. So far, indeed, so well.
My worthy cousin, 't was your wish I should not dwell
In Spain, but that I should inhabit Africa.
There man is like a mouse beside a tiger. Bah!
I 'll be revenged on you, — most damnably, I will!
Just let me get some dinner, be it half a fill;
Then on you I will launch my creditors in full,
And they shall haunt you, bait you, as we bait a bull.
[*In a corner of the room he notices a magnificent pair of half-boots ornamented with lace; he immediately kicks off his own and draws them on.*
Let me examine now this most mysterious place.
[*After having looked all round him.*
There 's something here, indeed, reminds me of his face.
This window strongly barred, closed doors, and dungeon gloom

Unpleasantly suggest a prototype, — the tomb!
Or else a bottle, where wine enters at the top. [*Sighs.*
Ah, wine! what consolation —
[*Enters cabinet, and then returns with gestures of surprise.*
Humph! a pretty stop
To my investigation. Not an outlet here.
[*Goes to doors at the back, opens them, looks out, then closes them, and returns to the front of the stage.*
Not a soul visible. Well, plainly I am clear
Of those sweet Alguazils: but, in the devil's name,
Where have I got to? Yet to me 't is all the same;
Why should I plague myself to either fear or wonder?
If people come, of course, I 've made a little blunder
In getting here — that 's all. Yes; as I said, 't is good
To taste a trifle, now and then, of solitude;
But this is wearisome. [*Sits, and yawns violently.*
Aha! what 's this I see?
[*Starts up again, and examines a small cupboard let into the wall near the corner of the recess on the right.*
'T is not unlike some studious book-worm's library.
[*Opens it, and discovers it to be a well-stocked larder.*
Upon my life! a larder! — chicken, pasties, ham,
Wine nicely ranged in bottles! In luck's way I am
To have dropped here, then, after all!
[*Examines the bottles one after the other.*
There 's quite a choice.
Bravo! now let me o'er the sparkling cheer rejoice.
[*He brings the little table from the corner where it stands, and loads it with all that the cupboard contains — bottles, plates, dishes, etc. He then takes up one of the bottles.*
First let me read this label. 'T is a noble work [*Drinks.*
By that same luminary that doth rarely lurk
Behind a cloud, — "Xerès des Chevaliers." That 's good!
To all true cavaliers it is both drink and food!

[*Sits at table, and drinks again.*

Where is the book, I say, composed by human brains
In which such genuine, true, and sparkling spirit reigns?
Ah, how consoling! [*Drinks again.*] Now I'll eat.
[*Cuts into the pasty.*
Dogs! Alguazils!
With exultation every fibre in me thrills!
I have escaped you! [*Eating.*] Ah, this pasty is a king!
And when the master comes I will its praises sing.
[*Rises, goes to cupboard and brings out another knife, fork, and plate, which he places on the table opposite his own. Sits again.*
What 's more, I will invite him to partake of it,
Unless, perchance, to kick me out he should see fit.
I 'd best eat quickly. [*He eats with redoubled haste.*
When my dinner I have done,
I 'll round about the mansion take a hasty run.
The host, a bachelor, is possibly in league
With something feminine. I seem to scent intrigue
In the still atmosphere. Howe'er my thoughts I speak
It matters not; so here, mine host! in mode antique
I thank thee, and embrace the altar of the feast!
[*He kneels and encircles the table with his arms.*
This charming wine [*drinks*] must be a good man's wine at least.
Yes, when he comes, I will announce my proper name,
And put the, O my most accursed coz, to shame!
That Zafari, dare he to step across thy way?
That worthless gipsy, naked-footed brigand — eh? —
Proclaim relationship, however fair and just: —
Don Cæsar de Bazan, cousin of Don Sallust
(Of whom he thought himself so comfortably rid)!
Ah, what surprise! How came he back, then, in Madrid?
Was 't in the night? Was 't in the morning? How and where?

Did he turn up? "The devil brought him," say the men.
"Oh, la! we thought him dead," the women murmur then.
And yet this mighty clatter will increase tenfold
When my three hundred creditors shout for their gold,
My worthy cousin Sallust. Gold I sorely lack
At present. [*A noise heard at doors.*
Some one comes! Now for a hasty track
Outside perchance. Great Cæsar, be thyself; and seem
No less.

[*He envelops himself in his cloak up to the eyes. The doors at the back open and a Lackey in livery appears, carrying a heavy leather wallet on his back.*

SCENE III.

DON CÆSAR, A LACKEY.

DON CÆSAR (*gazing at him from head to foot*).

What seek you friend? [*Aside.*] The peril is extreme;
I must be firm.

LACKEY.

I seek Don Cæsar de Bazan.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

Well, this is marvellous! [*Aloud.*] Don Cæsar? I'm
the man.

LACKEY.

You really are Don Cæsar?

DON CÆSAR.

Yes, the very same.
I always had the honour to sustain that name.
And Count of Garo —

LACKEY (*putting the wallet down*).

Will your lordship count that out?

DON CÆSAR (*astonished, aside*).

Money for me! What is the silly fool about?
[*Aloud.*] My very good —

LACKEY.

If you will only kindly count,
You'll find, my lord, that I have brought the right amount.

DON CÆSAR (*gravely*).

All right. I understand. [*Aside.*] I wish indeed the devil —
But it is fortunate — Be it for good or evil,
Trust me, I'll not refuse it. [*Aloud.*] Need you a receipt?

LACKEY.

So please you, no.

DON CÆSAR (*pointing to table and chair*).

Then put it there, or on that seat.
Whence comes it, sir?

LACKEY.

Your lordship knows.

DON CÆSAR.

Ha! to be sure
But —

LACKEY.

Truly, it is sent by one to make secure
The execution of what you well know.

DON CÆSAR.

Ha!

LACKEY.

And
We both must be reserved — hush!

DON CÆSAR.

Hush! I understand.
This money comes — The phrase is really grandiose;
Repeat it to me.

LACKEY.

Yes, this money —

DON CÆSAR.

I suppose
It is from him —

LACKEY.

And for that purpose —

DON CÆSAR.

Even so —
'T is clear. And both of us —

LACKEY.

Must be, as you well know,
Discreet.

DON CÆSAR.

That 's very certain, friend.

LACKEY.

Well, as for me
I fail to comprehend.

DON CÆSAR.

Ah, bah!

LACKEY.

But you can see?

DON CÆSAR.

Of course, and of the money I receive the charge.

LACKEY.

Count it, my lord.

DON CÆSAR.

What do you take me for?
[*Admiring the size of the wallet on the table.*
How large
This fellow's stomach is!

LACKEY (*insisting*).

Nay, if you please, my lord —

DON CÆSAR.

I 'll take your word.

LACKEY.

Well, then, my lord, this precious hoard
Is all in sovereigns; good quadruples, each in grains
Some thirty-six. Of silver, too, each sack contains
A goodly store.

[CÆSAR *opens the wallet, and pulls out several bags of gold and silver coin, which he regards with admiration. He then empties some of them on the table, and fills his pockets with the gold.*

DON CÆSAR (*with delight*).

The hero of the fairy tale
With golden heaps did thus his eyes and heart regale!
He amorously died upon his precious million;
But, as for me, I 'll load up, like a sturdy galleon.

[*He continues to fill every pocket he has about him, and seems to have completely forgotten the presence of the* LACKEY.

Don Cæsar and the Lackey.

LACKEY (*standing coolly by, watching him*).

My lord, I wait your orders.

DON CÆSAR.

Eh? What for?

LACKEY.

To do
That which, of course, is fully understood by *you*.
Great interests —

DON CÆSAR (*abruptly and intelligently*).

Public and private; yes, you 're right.

LACKEY.

The execution of the same is to be quite
Immediate. That 's what I was told to say.

DON CÆSAR (*clapping him on the back*).

You are
A faithful servant, and surpass by very far
The common run of them.

LACKEY.

I also here am sent
To aid, so that no time should uselessly be spent.

DON CÆSAR.

Your master is a thoughtful man, and knows what 's what.
Let 's do as he requires. [*Aside.*] May I be hanged, or shot,
If I know how to act! [*Aloud.*] Approach ere we begin,
And swallow this. [*Pours out wine and hands it to him.*

LACKEY.

My lord —

DON CÆSAR.

'T is Oropesa; in
All Spain not better wine.

[LACKEY *drinks.* CÆSAR *again fills glass.*

Now let us sit and talk.

[*Sits at table with him, and as fast as he drinks,* CÆSAR *fills his glass.*

His eyes begin to sparkle. [*Aside, aloud.*] Did'st e'er take a walk
Abroad, and watch the dark and curling smoke ascend?
Well, that comes from the fires of our own passions, friend.

[*Fills glass.*

This may seem stupid, but the smoke when in the sky
And in a nasty chimney acts quite differently;
The one goes gaily up, the other tumbles down, —

[*Rubs his knee.*

That is, the man does. [*Fills both glasses.*] Man 's at best a clumsy clown, —
A lump of lead. Let 's drink. Why, all these rich doubloons
Are not worth e'en a song from drunken passing loons.

[*Mysteriously.*

Look here! we must be prudent. If we fill too full
We burst! My very faithful friend, together pull
The collar of my cloak. [*Leans forward.*

LACKEY (*proudly*).

My lord, please recollect
I 'm not your valet.

[*Before* CÆSAR *can stop him, he rings the bell on the table.*

DON CÆSAR (*aside and afraid*).

He has rung. Now I expect
The master will in person come. I 'm lost!

[*One of the Negroes enters.* DON CÆSAR, *in a state of anxiety turns away not knowing what to do.*

LACKEY (*to the Negro*).

Attach
The collar of his lordship's cloak.

[*The Negro gravely approaches* CÆSAR, *hooks the collar of his cloak; then bows, and retires, leaving* CÆSAR *petrified with astonishment*

DON CÆSAR (*rising from the table, aside*).

It is old Scratch,
And this the house of Beelzebub!

[*Goes forward, and walks up and down with rapid strides.*

Well, be it so,
Whate'er turns up is welcome. One thing now I know
Is that of money there 's a very ample stock,
And thus I 'm planted firm as any sea-girt rock.

[*He turns to the* LACKEY, *who remains drinking at the table, and who begins to sway about on his chair.*

Quite right. Go on. [*Aside.*] Now, shall I pay my debts? — Oh, fie!
Cæsar, could you be such a fool as e'en to try?
To water such vile flowers as creditors would be
A waste indeed of time and youthful energy.
There 's nothing so corrupting to a man as gold;
And naught a more plebeian spirit would unfold
Than paying what one owes. What would the gallants say?
Ha! well —

LACKEY (*draining his glass*).

What orders have you?

DON CÆSAR.

Don't disturb me, pray;
I meditate. Drink on the while.

[*The* LACKEY *continues drinking. All at once* CÆSAR *taps his forehead as an idea strikes him.*

Yes! [*To* LACKEY.] Get thee up.
This must thou do. Upon these golden pieces sup;
Fill all thy pockets!

[*The* LACKEY *rises very unsteadily, and proceeds, as directed, to fill his pockets with the gold;* CÆSAR *talking to him and helping him.*

In a narrow lane that ends
The Plaza Mayor, stands a house to which one's friends
Might not object, because it is a fine one; but
One of its panes has had a piece of paper put
Across it. Nine 's the number, and the front is narrow.
You 'll enter there.

LACKEY.

What next?

DON CÆSAR.

The stairs are like an arrow;
Beware how you go up.

LACKEY.

A ladder, eh?

DON CÆSAR.

Not quite,
But nearly. When you reach the top of the long flight
You 'll see a lovely creature who resides up there.
She wears a six-sous cap, has curly auburn hair,
And is in stature short. A charming woman she
As ever any one could hope, or wish, to see.

Her eyes in former times were brilliant indigo;
And once before the Pope she danced a fandango.
To her one hundred golden ducats you will give;
She is my mistress, so respect her, as you live!
At the next door, and redder than the reddest rose,
You 'll see a tall broad man who owns a monstrous nose;
His hat is slouched close down upon his shaggy brows,
And his long rapier knows at least a thousand rows:
You 'll give him six piastres. Farther on proceed,
And soon you 'll see a pitch-black tenement succeed, —
A restaurant where wine is drunk, and songs are sung
Such as are heard there only. You will see among
The company that smoke and drink, a gentleman
Who never swears (I really don t believe he can, —
He 's very quiet); Goulatromba, — that 's his name.
He 'll take his thirty ecus with a blush of shame,
No doubt; but tell him he 's to spend them all in drink,
And more will follow; so there is no need to shrink.
Give freely to the ragamuffins all around;
They 'll swallow anything, from halfpence to a pound!
So be not much astonished should their staring eyes
Assume what might be thought a most unnatural size.

LACKEY.

And next?

DON CÆSAR.

What money may remain you then will keep.

LACKEY.

Any more orders?

DON CÆSAR.

Yes; be sure that you drink deep, —
Get very drunk. Break all, except your precious head,
And seek not till to-morrow night to go to bed.

LACKEY.

My lord, that is sufficient. [*Zig-zags towards the door.*

DON CÆSAR (*watching him, aside*).

He 's superbly drunk? [*Calls him back.*
Just stop a minute! — when you 're out, belike some monk
Of jollity's great order will be at your heels.
Be sure that you behave yourself so that he feels
You are a worthy comrade of the drinker class.
Should sundry pieces from your pockets, as you pass
Along, fall out, pursue your steady, onward path,
And let them fall. To show in any way your wrath —
E'en saw you them picked up — would be bad form indeed.
If meddling fingers try your pockets, take no heed,
But be indulgent. In this naughty world of ours,
Of strange, untoward adventure, and of evil powers,
'T is hard indeed if now and then a taste of joy
To some poor suffering creature is not an alloy
For his long pain. [*Gravely.*] No doubt the rope will stretch his neck
Some day; then pity 't is his simple joy to check!
Now, off with thee!

[*Exit* LACKEY. CÆSAR, *when alone, sits at the table, and, placing his elbows on it, appears to reflect deeply.*

A wise man never makes abuse
Of money nor the Christian, but the best of use.
I 've got sufficient now to live at least eight days, —
And I *will* live! If still a little by me stays
Beyond that time, in pious works I 'll use it; but
The door, e'en then, will surely in my face be shut!
The blunder that this clumsy lackey-knave has made
Will be found out; and spite of all that I have said —

[*The doors at the back open, and a* DUENNA *enters. She has grey hair; wears a black dress and mantilla; and carries a fan.*

SCENE IV.

Don Cæsar, a Duenna.

DUENNA (*on the threshold*).

Don Cæsar de Bazan?

DON CÆSAR (*although absorbed, suddenly raises his head*).

What now? Ha, a female! [*Aside.*

[*Whilst the* DUENNA *is making a deep curtsey at the doors,* CÆSAR *starts up and comes forward to the front.*

Either the devil or Don Sallust heads this tale!
I'll wager I shall see my cousin next appear.
An old duenna. [*Aloud.*] Cæsar de Bazan is here.
What seek you with him? Usually it is the case
The old one is succeeded by a youthful face.

DUENNA (*curtseying again and signing the cross*).

My lord, I here salute you on this holy day,
And humbly trust you never may be led astray.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

That's very pious. [*Aloud.*] Be it so. Most worthy dame,
I bid you welcome.

DUENNA.

May high Heaven bless your name.
[*Mysteriously.*

A certain somebody has sent me here to you;
Have you then given her, to-night, a rendezvous?

DON CÆSAR.

'T is very possible.

DUENNA (*advancing and showing him a folded note, which she does not allow him to take*).

Well, then, my gay young spark,
'T is really you that 'neath the cover of the dark
Would see her whom you know of?

DON CÆSAR.

Without doubt.

DUENNA.

'T is good.
This lady, being married — be it understood
To an old bearded hunks — has only one refuge
In her distress, and that of course is subterfuge.
It naturally is her greatest wish and care
That all should be secure ere hither she repair,
And therefore am I sent. I nothing know of her,
But she who sent me said that you would all infer
From what I tell you, leaving out the names.

DON CÆSAR.

Quite so —
Excepting mine. In these precautions doth she show
Her own good sense.

DUENNA.

Exactly. 'T is but right, methinks,
Such care should be displayed, for every lady shrinks
At chances of exposure; yet when she desires
To see the object who in her own soul inspires
True love, she risks the interview. So now, my lord,
Give me what confirmation you may best afford
That all is safe.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

Oh, bless the ugly would-be saint!
What a stiff hedge-row round a billet-doux. [*Aloud.*]
Acquaint
Your lady that you 've seen me. — *me*, I say.

DUENNA (*laying note on table, which* CÆSAR *eyes curiously*).

Then you
Will write upon the back of this same billet-doux
The one word "Come." But it must not be in your hand,
In case of danger. This, of course, you understand.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

May I be hanged, I don't! [*Aloud.*] Well, let me see —
[*Stretches out his hand to take the letter, which is sealed, but the* DUENNA *prevents him from touching it.*

DUENNA.

Touch not!
You ought to recognize the fold.

DON CÆSAR.

Of course. [*Aside.*] Oh, what
A curs'd old witch! I'm balked. But I must play my part.
[*He rings the bell. One of the Negroes immediately appears.*
Here! Can you write?
[*The Negro nods his head only, to the astonishment of* DON CÆSAR.
A nod! So, are you dumb, my smart
Black beauty? [*Negro makes a sign in the affirmative.*
Good. Dumb servants, eh? [*Aside.*] What next?
[*Shows Negro the letter that the* DUENNA *holds down on the table.*
Write there,
"Come."
[*Negro writes as directed, and the* DUENNA *puts away the letter. On a sign from* DON CÆSAR, *the Negro instantly retires.*
[*Aside.*] He is most obedient.

DUENNA (*approaching* CÆSAR).

The lady fair
Will be with you to-night. Ah, she is beautiful!

DON CÆSAR.

Yes, charming!

DUENNA.

Her attendant also. See her pull
Me on one side in church, greatly to my surprise,
During the sermon. What a profile! and what eyes!
The sparkle of the demon, but an angel's face;
She talks of love, too, with great learning and much grace.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

From this account the servant would for me suffice.

DUENNA.

We 're apt sometimes, in judging to be over nice.
There 's beauty in the mistress, also in the slave;
But yours must be most lovely!

DON CÆSAR.

Ah, I well may rave
Of her perfections!

DUENNA (*with a low curtsey*).

With humility I kiss
Your lordship's hands.

DON CÆSAR (*giving a handful of gold*).

And I now grease your paw with this.

DUENNA (*pocketing the gold*).

How golden is all youth indeed!

DON CÆSAR.

Farewell, dame.

DUENNA (*going, returns*).

Ha!
Should you e'er wish to find me, my name 's Oliva.
The convent of San Isidro.
[*Goes out at doors, and then puts her head in again.*
Upon the right
Within the church, by the third pillar I 'm in sight.
[CÆSAR *makes a gesture of impatience. She goes out, and then almost immediately re-appears.*
You 'll see your love to-night Think of me in your prayers.

DON CÆSAR (*angrily*).

Begone! [*The* DUENNA *goes out, and* CÆSAR *is left alone.*
Well, even if I 'm taken unawares
Astonishment is scarcely possible. With gold
I 'm well supplied; but what Dame Fortune will unfold
Is yet a puzzle. I have stayed my appetite,
And now a something choice will gratify my sight.
From such a bright beginning Hope may well ascend;
Will it sustain its flight, or plump down at the end?
[*The doors at the back open, and* DON GURITAN *appears with two long naked swords under his arm.*

SCENE V.

DON CÆSAR, DON GURITAN.

DON GURITAN (*at the back*).

Don Cæsar de Bazan?

DON CÆSAR (*turning, and seeing* GURITAN *with swords*).
That 's in the right direction!
Th' adventure was a good one: now it 's quite perfection!
A first-rate dinner, gold, a rendezvous — a duel!
I 'm Cæsar once again! My fate 's no longer cruel!
[*He gaily approaches* GURITAN *with repeated bows.* GURITAN, *with fixed eyes advances stiffly to the front of the stage.*
You are quite right. 'T is here. Approach, and take a seat.
[*Presents him with a chair, which* GURITAN *takes no notice of.*
Make yourself quite at home. Pray sit, and rest your feet.
I 'm really quite delighted that you 've hither come.
What do they in Madrid? I 've only just got home.
It is a charming town of which I nothing know.
Does good Matalobos his pranks still in it show?
Myself, I 've little fear for those who cut a purse;
A girl who steals a heart I think a great deal worse.
Oh, women! faithless women! they o'erwrought my brain
With their sly arts; but speak to me! I would regain
My senses which are scared; for, strange as it appears,
I have been thus unsettled for the past few years.
I 'm an absurdity, existing, scarce alive, —
A sleeping member in the busy human hive.
Robbed of my plume; the gloves I 've lost from off my hands,
And now I 'm just returned from far-off savage lands!

DON GURITAN.
You say you just arrive? I, too, have done the same;
But from much farther off.

DON CÆSAR.

What then, may be the name
Of the much-favoured clime?

DON GURITAN.

The north, if now my mouth
Must speak it!

DON CÆSAR.

Strange! and I have come from farthest south.

DON GURITAN.

I 'm furious!

DON CÆSAR.

I burst with rage!

DON GURITAN.

Twelve hundred leagues
I 've come!

DON CÆSAR.

Two thousand I have done. Talk of intrigues!
What have I not been victim of? Yes; I have seen
Men of all colours, — yellow, black and blue, and green;
And women also! Skies of most delightful azure;
Towns built in which to pass a life of ceaseless pleasure.
Outside them though, whenever they were ruled by Turk,
Appeared rough specimens of his peculiar work, —
Lank bodies nailed to doors, or else impaled on spikes!

DON GURITAN.

I have been swindled, sir!

DON CÆSAR.

My lot yet harder strikes,
For I was sold!

DON GURITAN.

I, nearly exiled!

DON CÆSAR.

I was swung
Close upon off!

DON GURITAN.

I, sent away to Neubourg 'mong
Barbarian Germans. Most adroitly was it done.
I bore a box. Inside, a paper, written on,
Read thus: "Keep the old fool as long as e'er you can."

DON CÆSAR (*roaring with laughter*).

Perfect indeed! Who did it?

DON GURITAN.

Cæsar de Bazan.
I 'll twist his neck!

DON CÆSAR.

Ha!

DON GURITAN.

Not content, as it would seem,
He sends a lackey with apologies! To dream
I would accept them! No, sir! I detained the groom
In custody, — yes; locked him in my private room.
This rascal, Cæsar, adds to injury insult;
And death, alone, for this must be the quick result.
Where is he, then, that I may kill him?

DON CÆSAR.

Here you have
Don Cæsar!

DON GURITAN.

What! again?

DON CÆSAR.

Of course.

DON GURITAN.

Look here, my brave
Young friend, you weary me. Enough, I say, of this!
I might consider your behavior, too, amiss.

DON CÆSAR (*laughing*).

You 're really most diverting. Are you of those fellows
Who look upon themselves as martyrs, when they 're jealous?
If so, I 'm sorry for you. From our own sad vices
Evil too often springs; not from the wild devices
Of others. I myself, I tell you, rather would
Wear a tall pair of horns, than have it understood
That I was jealous. You are both, perchance. To-night
Your wife will meet me here.

DON GURITAN.

My wife!

DON CÆSAR.

Ay, by this light!
Your wife.

DON GURITAN.

But I 'm not married!

DON CÆSAR.

What, sir, can you mean?
Not married? For the last few minutes you have been
Before my face assuming all those injured airs
That husbands only take when groaning under cares
More or less real. What right have you to make a fuss?
Or, I should say, to make yourself ridiculous?

DON GURITAN.

Are you aware, sir, that you 're most exasperating?

DON CÆSAR.

Bah!

DON GURITAN.

'T is too much!

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed?

DON GURITAN.

Yes! and without debating
Farther the point, you 'll pay me!

DON CÆSAR (*sarcastically examining* GURITAN'S *shoes which are smothered with ribbons*).

In a former day
The head was always chosen for a grand display
Of ribbons. Fashion is in changes wondrous fleet;
I see 't is now the thing to decorate the feet!

DON GURITAN.

Come, we will fight!

DON CÆSAR (*coolly*).

You think so?

DON GURITAN.

Although you are not
Don Cæsar, I 'll commence with you!

DON CÆSAR.

Good! On the spot?

DON GURITAN (*presenting a sword*).

At once!

DON CÆSAR (*accepting the sword*).

Well, when a duel offers, I e'er take it.

DON GURITAN.

Where shall it be?

DON CÆSAR (*pointing off*).

Behind yon wall. Quiet can't make it
A spot more favourable.

DON GURITAN (*trying the point of the sword*).

Lead me where you will.
Don Cæsar I can duly in succession kill.

DON CÆSAR.

Indeed?

DON GURITAN.

Of course.

DON CÆSAR (*sticking the point of his sword into the boards*).

If one of us should now be killed,
I cannot see how this same boast can be fulfilled!

DON GURITAN.

Come on, sir, — come!

[*They go out at the back, and before the sound of their footsteps dies away, a small concealed door opens in the wall on the right, and* DON SALLUST *enters. He is dressed in a dark green habit and looks round uneasily.*

SCENE VI.

DON SALLUST.

I cast my eyes around the room
And mark no preparations. Must I then assume
He has neglected them?
[*Seeing the table loaded with meats, etc.*
What means all this?
[*Listening to the sound of* CÆSAR *and* GURITAN'S *retreating footsteps.*
That sound?
Gudiel observed the Page this morning, and soon found
He sought the lodging of Don Guritan. Ruy Blas
Absents himself — and this same Page — Is 't come to pass,
That there 's some counter-plot afoot? By Satan! yes,
I see it all! Some message to the Queen, — naught less! —
Through Guritan, to warn her of the trap now set.
Naught from the Mutes can be obtained; but, trust me! yet
Will I defeat them! Guritan it struck me not
Might be gained over.
[DON CÆSAR *enters; he has the sword in his hand, which he throws upon a chair.*

SCENE VII.

DON SALLUST, DON CÆSAR.

DON CÆSAR (*from the doors at the back*).

Ha, old devil! this is what
I fully did anticipate.

DON SALLUST (*turning petrified with astonishment*).

Don Cæsar!

DON CÆSAR (*folding his arms with a shout of laughter*).

Well,
What dark, infernal plot 's afoot? It so befell
That I came sprawling on it.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

All, I fear, is lost!

DON CÆSAR (*still laughing*).

This morning long, to my fatigue and certain cost,
I 've wriggled in and out of your infernal nets.
No super-dainty fly entangled in them gets
With my consent. I 'm here to break them all. Ha, ha!

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

Demon! what has he done?

DON CÆSAR (*laughing louder*).

Your man with money — bah! —
Who came to execute " what you, of course, must know
From him who sent him." This is perfect, is n't it so?

DON SALLUST.

Well, sir?

DON CÆSAR.

I made him drunk!

DON SALLUST.

You did? And then the gold?

DON CÆSAR (*with dignity*).

In various sums to various persons was it doled;
One has one's friends, you know.

DON SALLUST.

Unjustly you suspect
Me of designs. I —

DON CÆSAR (*jingling his pockets*).

Truly, I had due respect
For my own pockets, as you may perceive. Then came
The lady —

DON SALLUST.

Ha!

DON CÆSAR (*noticing his anxiety*).

She whom you know — without a name —
[SALLUST *listens with redoubled anxiety.* CÆSAR, *laughing, goes on.*
She sent an old duenna to me — ugly cat! —
With quite a beard, and nose inclining to be flat —

DON SALLUST.

Why came she?

DON CÆSAR.

Just to see that all was really right, —
That it *was* Cæsar who would meet the dame to-night!

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

Just Heaven! [*Aloud.*] What was your reply?

DON CÆSAR.

Of course I said
I would be here.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

So, so! I need not be afraid.
All is not lost, perchance.

DON CÆSAR.

To crown the day's events,
Your slaying Captain Guritan himself presents.
[SALLUST *makes a movement of surprise.*
He would not see, this morning, some sage messenger, —
A lackey sent by "Cæsar" with him to confer, —
And he, in consequence, demanded satisfaction —

DON SALLUST.

Well, and what then?

DON CÆSAR.

I straightway killed this man of action.

DON SALLUST.

You did?

DON CÆSAR.

I did. He's now expiring near a wall.

DON SALLUST.

But are you sure he's dead?

DON CÆSAR.

By this, he's past recall.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

I breathe again. So far he's done no real harm,
But on the contrary. So, I must now disarm
My adversary, and get rid of him at once.
It might indeed have been most awkward, for the nonce.
[*Aloud.*] Your story's singular. Then others you've not seen?

DON CÆSAR.

Not one; but I shall see some, as, of course, I mean
Within this precious domicile of yours to stay.

I 'll cause a rumpus, and, perhaps, no small dismay,
By a great scandal in the town. Of this rest sure.

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

The devil!

[*Quickly, and going nearer to* DON CÆSAR.

Keep the money; but, pray, leave the house!

DON CÆSAR.

Think you I 'll steal away then slyly, like a mouse?
Such tactics might suit *you*, no doubt; but won't suit *me*.
Of course, you would be glad that I again should see
The lovely azure of that glowing southern sky!
Not so.

DON SALLUST.

Believe me —

DON CÆSAR.

No! Within this palace-prison,
A strong conviction in my mind has now arisen, —
That you intend some villainous and traitorous deed.
Think you of what is passing I have ta'en no heed?
These court-intrigues remind one of that ladder double:
On one side mounts the patient, with his look of trouble;
Upon the other 't is the executioner, —
With whom the 'foresaid patient must perforce confer, —
That 's you!

DON SALLUST.

Ha!

DON CÆSAR.

I withdraw the ladder! Bir-r-r —

DON SALLUST.

I swear —

DON CÆSAR.

To spoil this would-be plot, I 'll make it now my care.
I know you 're very subtle, cousin; but this time

I, too, will try my hand at taking birds with lime.
I mean to stay.

DON SALLUST.

But listen —

DON CÆSAR.

Spare your rhetoric!
You sold me to the corsairs. 'T was a scurvy trick!
And now you seek to rob me even of my name!
At least, to compromise it — soil it! Where's your shame?

DON SALLUST.

A far-off chance!

DON CÆSAR.

A far-off chance! Treat rogues as such,
And fools as fools; but men defile not with your touch!
I will frustrate your plans, — save those you seek to soil;
Success will well reward me for my hours of toil.
[*He mounts up to the window, and looks out.*
My name shall ring upon the house-top. Stay, and see.
Ha! Alguazils are passing.
[*Waving his hand outside the window, and shouting.*
Hither! Come to me!

DON SALLUST (*aghast, at the front of the stage*).

Should he now name himself, then all is lost indeed!
[*Enter at the back an* ALCADE *and several* ALGUAZILS. SALLUST *in great perplexity.* CÆSAR *walks up to the* ALCADE *in triumph.*

SCENE VIII.

The same. AN ALCADE, ALGUAZILS.

DON CÆSAR (*to the* ALCADE).

Alcade, your presence here is of the utmost need.

DON SALLUST (*pointing to* DON CÆSAR).

To take Matalobos, the famous robber-chief!

DON CÆSAR (*stupefied*).

How? What!

DON SALLUST (*aside*).

Twenty-four hours wins all! [*Aloud to* ALCADE.]
Yes, seize the thief!
In open day he ventured here. [ALGUAZILS *seize* CÆSAR.

DON CÆSAR (*furiously to* SALLUST).

Your lackey I —
With vast facility you tell a monstrous lie!

ALCADE.

Who called us here?

DON SALLUST.

I did.

DON CÆSAR.

Another lie!

ALCADE.

Peace, man!
Would'st reason with us?

DON CÆSAR.

I 'm Don Cæsar de Bazan!

DON SALLUST.

Don Cæsar! See his cloak. If you examine it,
You 'll find the name 'Don Sallust' 'neath the collar writ.
He has just stolen it from me.
[ALGUAZILS *pull off the cloak and the* ALCADE *examines it.*

ALCADE.

Yes, that 's quite correct.

DON SALLUST.

The doublet that he wears —

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

Another lie direct!
Curs'd knave!

DON SALLUST.

— Was from the Count of Alba stolen, sirs.
[*Pointing out a crest embroidered on the left sleeve.*
Here is the crest.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

The devil in the villain stirs!

ALCADE (*examining the crest*).

Two castles, or —

DON SALLUST.

Below, "Enriquez Guzman."
[CÆSAR *when struggling with* ALGUAZILS *causes several doubloons to fall out of his pockets.* SALLUST *shows the* ALCADE *how full of them his pockets are.*
Thus
An honest man displays his wealth, and teaches us
The way to keep it!

ALCADE.

Humph!

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

I 'm nicely done for!

[ALGUAZILS *search him, and take the money from him.*

AN ALGUAZIL.

Here

Are various papers.

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

All my billets-doux! Oh dear!

How carefully I saved them.

ALCADE (*examining them*).

Letters, writings; yes.

DON SALLUST (*pointing out superscription*).

Count Alba — see!

ALCADE.

Yes.

DON CÆSAR.

But —

ALGUAZILS (*binding his hands together*).

'T is he! and no one less.

AN ALGUAZIL (*entering, to* ALCADE).

A man, señor, outside lies dead, — assassinated.

ALCADE.

And the assassin?

DON SALLUST (*pointing to* CÆSAR).

There!

DON CÆSAR (*aside*).

Had the old fool but waited!

DON SALLUST.

When he came in, a while ago, he had a sword
Drawn in his hand. 'T is here.

[*Pointing to sword on the chair.*

ALCADE (*taking and examining it*).

Full proof it will afford:
There 's blood upon it. [*Turning to* CÆSAR.
Now, sir, with them you must tramp.

DON SALLUST (*to* CÆSAR *who is about to be led away*).

Good-night, Matalobos.

DON CÆSAR (*striding up to and regarding him sternly*).

You 're a confounded scamp!

ACT V.

THE LION AND THE TIGER.

SCENE.— *The same as in the last act. A lamp is on the table, and as the curtain rises* RUY BLAS *is alone. A sort of long black robe hides his dress.*

SCENE I.

RUY BLAS.

My dreams, my visions, all have vanished! Nothing meets
My eyes! I've wandered all day long about the streets.
Yet have I hoped. I'm calm. In the still hours of night
The lamp of thought burns with a purer, brighter light.
I nothing see that's fearful in these sombre walls:
Dark looms the furniture where'er the shadow falls.
The black, dumb servants are asleep. All is repose,
And nowhere pale Alarm her shuddering presence shows.
Yes, all goes well. My page no treachery can stir.
And Guritan is safe in all concerning *her*.
Kind Heaven! I may well bless thee that thou did'st permit
My warning to attain her; that I could outwit
The arch-deceiver Sallust; that she need not fear
His cruel hand. Once saved, then let my death draw near;
I'll hail it!
[*Produces a small phial from under his robe and places it on the table.*
Yes, die now, O miserable one!
E'en here, and all alone; for, lo! thy task is done.

Whatever is thy crime, here let it die with thee,
[*Opens his robe, and appears clad in the livery of the First Act.*
And on thy tomb be cast this cursed livery!
Should yonder demon gazè upon me, when no more,
[*Pushes a piece of furniture against the secret door in the wall.*
At least he shall not enter through that hateful door.
[*Returns to the table.*
The page has met Don Guritan; for when he left
This morning, 't was not eight o'clock. Of all bereft,
Why should I live? [*He fixes his eyes upon the phial.*
I have pronounced my own sad doom;
And soon shall close the ponderous portals of the tomb
Above my head! Yes, meet it is that I should fall —
And yet she loved me! [*Throws himself into a chair.*
Heaven, still on thee I call!
My courage fails me. [*Weeps.*] Shall they then our hearts thus sever?
Is there no peace for us? Must the stern fiat "Never,"
Go forth!
[*Hides his head in his hands and weeps bitterly; then raises his head and wildly continues, still regarding the phial.*
The man who sold me this, the question asked
What day 't was of the month. I knew not. Time has passed
Too rapidly for my poor brain. Men are so bad
That one may die twice o'er, and no one feel e'en sad.
Ah, how I suffer! — She for me did fondly care —
The hand I pressed, the lips that touched my forehead, where
Will the remembrance be? — Sweet angel! — Yes, I die
Heart-broken! Never shall I hear thy gentle sigh
For my hard fate! see not thy pallid anxious face,

Thy lovely form, bend o'er me in its matchless grace —
Ah, never, never more!

[*He moves his hand towards the phial; and as he is about to take hold of it, the doors at the back open.* THE QUEEN *appears, clothed in white, over which is a dark-coloured mantle and hood, which, thrown back upon her shoulders, displays her pallid face and head. She carries a dark-lantern in her hand, which she puts down on the floor, and hastily advances towards* RUY BLAS.

SCENE II.

RUY BLAS, THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN.

Don Cæsar!

RUY BLAS (*turning suddenly in affright and closing his robe*).

Heavens! 't is she!
Into these frightful toils she falls! Oh, can it be!
[*Aside.*] Hold, madame!

THE QUEEN.

Cæsar! Why this cry of wild alarm?

RUY BLAS.

Who bid you hither come!

THE QUEEN.

Yourself.

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

The demon's arm
Is there! [*Aloud.*] Myself — but how?

THE QUEEN.

From you I have received —

RUY BLAS.

Speak quick!

THE QUEEN.

A letter.

RUY BLAS.

Ha! — from me! Be not deceived —

THE QUEEN.

It is your writing —

RUY BLAS.

Say not that it is my hand!
What mortal brain could this foul treachery withstand!

THE QUEEN (*taking a note from her bosom and giving it to him*).

Nay, read it for yourself, and judge.

RUY BLAS (*reading*).

"A danger, deep
And terrible, is hanging o'er my head. To sleep
I dare not; so to aid me in my pressing need
I pray thee, O my gentle Queen" —
[*He becomes stupefied with horror, and is unable to proceed.*

THE QUEEN (*leaning over and pointing to the words with her finger*).

"Use all the speed
That time will lend thee, and this night to me repair
At my lone house, or I must sink in deep despair."

RUY BLAS (*in a faint voice*).

Base treachery!

THE QUEEN (*continuing*).

"Unknown, unrecognized, at night,
Facing the avenue, a door will meet your sight,
And there you 'll enter. One most faithful to the cause
Will welcome you within."

RUY BLAS (*aside*).

How the arch-villain draws
The net together! I 'd forgotten this. [*Aloud.*] Begone!

THE QUEEN.

Don Cæsar! I will go. Dismissed thus, and alone!
What have I done?

RUY BLAS.

What done? Great heavens! you will be lost!

THE QUEEN.

What mean you?

RUY BLAS.

All I dare to say is, at the most,
Fly! and fly quickly!

THE QUEEN.

I this morning hither sent,
To make all sure, one I could trust —

RUY BLAS (*looking anxiously round*).

With terror spent,
Each fleeting moment is a dagger to my heart!
I feel your life-blood flowing from you! O depart!

THE QUEEN (*as if struck by an idea*).

This fond devotion, that my love for you hath dreamed,
Inspires me! Some dread danger round your head hath gleamed,
And you would hide it from me. Cæsar, here I stay!

RUY BLAS.

Oh, Heaven! Cherish not the thought, but speed away!
This is no hour — no place for you!

THE QUEEN.

And yet, this note
Is yours. Why, then —

RUY BLAS (*raising his eyes to heaven*).

Great Heaven, thy pitying aid devote
To her!

THE QUEEN.

You wish to send me hence!

RUY BLAS (*taking her hands*).

Believe —

THE QUEEN.

'T is so.
You wrote this letter, then —

RUY BLAS.

'T is meet that you should know
I did not write. I am a very demon, hence!
'T is you that under this most mean and foul pretence
Are lured to sure destruction. It is true. Yes, hell
Is gaping here around with snares as deep and fell
As can be laid! Oh, can I not persuade you yet!
Will you not comprehend, — you upon whom I 've set
My heart — my soul! You know I love you; then be saved!
The danger is too great to be thus rashly braved.

THE QUEEN.

Don Cæsar!

RUY BLAS.

Oh, begone! Yet now I think of it—
You were let in?

THE QUEEN.

I was.

RUY BLAS.

By whom?

THE QUEEN.

One who thought fit
To keep within the shadow of the sombre wall;
He wore a mask, too.

RUY BLAS.

Satan! Was he short, or tall?
And did he speak? Was any question by him asked?

[*A man with a mask on appears at the doors at back.*

MASKED MAN.

No, none!

[*Takes off his mask, and* THE QUEEN *and* RUY BLAS, *terror-stricken, recognize* DON SALLUST.

SCENE III.

The Same. DON SALLUST.

RUY BLAS.

Fly! madame—fly!

DON SALLUST.

The time for that is passed;
Madame de Neubourg is no longer Queen of Spain.

THE QUEEN (*with horror*).

Don Sallust!

DON SALLUST (*pointing to* RUY BLAS).

Henceforth mate to *that* man; seek in vain
To fly from him!

THE QUEEN.

This is indeed a snare, deep set!
Don Cæsar —

RUY BLAS (*despairingly*).

Madame, he hath spread this fatal net!

DON SALLUST (*slowly approaching* THE QUEEN).

I have you now; so hear me whilst I calmly speak
Of facts, the which your Majesty may vainly seek
To contradict. I find you here at midnight in
Don Cæsar's chamber — Interrupt not! To begin,
This circumstance alone will in the eyes of Rome
Annul your marriage. This, I 'll see, shall straightway come,
And promptly, to the Holy Father's knowledge; but
To counteract it, one condition will I put —
'T is this:
[*Draws from his pocket a parchment, which he opens and presents to* THE QUEEN.
That you will sign this letter to the King,
Which to his hand the Lord High Chamberlain shall bring.
That then, both you and he together shall repair
To a well furnished carriage, which is standing there
In readiness. [*Pointing outside.*] Beneath the cover of the night
I 'll freely give my aid in this immediate flight
By Alcantara into Portugal. Obey,
And no one knows. Refuse, and at the break of day

Madrid shall ring with your adventure here. My hand
Is firm. Writing materials you can here command.
[*Points to the table on which is a small desk.*

THE QUEEN (*overwhelmed, sinks into a fauteuil*).
I 'm in his power!

DON SALLUST.
Your signature is all I need
To send this to the King.
[*In a low voice to* RUY BLAS *who seems struck as with a thunderbolt.*
I work for you. Take heed!
[*To* THE QUEEN.] Sign, madame!

THE QUEEN (*aside and trembling*).
What am I to do?

DON SALLUST (*in her ear, presenting a pen*).
What is a crown
Compared to happiness! In that you may well drown
All thought about the hollow splendours of a throne.
Rest sure of secrecy. The servants are my own,
And nothing know of this. It rests between us three.
[*Endeavours to put the pen into her hand, which she neither takes nor rejects.*
If you refuse, the upshot of it you will see
In scandal, and the cloister!

THE QUEEN (*overcome*).
Heav'n!

DON SALLUST (*indicating* RUY BLAS).
He loves you well,
And is most worthy of you; neither need I dwell
Upon his rank and name. Don Cæsar de Bazan —
[*Places* THE QUEEN'S *hand upon the parchment, which, trembling and faint, she is upon the point of signing.*

RUY BLAS (*suddenly rousing himself*).

My name is Ruy Blas, simply; lackey to that man!
[*Snatches the pen and parchment from* THE QUEEN'S *hand and tears it.*
Sign it not, madame! There! — I stifle!

THE QUEEN.

What say you, Don Cæsar?

RUY BLAS (*letting his robe fall, and appearing in livery*).

With that title I have naught to do.
[*Turning to* DON SALLUST.
I 've had enough of treason, treachery, and crime!
I would arrest their progress, — be there only time.
You deemed that you did well to whisper in my ear
Those words insidious! They only quelled the fear
For *her* that held me mute. 'T is time the truth were spoken,
And that the meshes of your hideous net were broken
That held me prisoner. True, I wear the lackey's coat;
But your base, traitorous acts the lackey's soul denote!

DON SALLUST (*coldly to* THE QUEEN).

Madame, he speaks the truth. My servant you behold.
[*With a tone of authority to* RUY BLAS.
Enough, sir! Say no more.

THE QUEEN (*wringing her hands*).

Great Heaven!

DON SALLUST (*continuing*).

Perchance his words Are premature.

[*Folding his arms, and speaking in a voice of thunder.*
Nathless, to me it now affords
The chance to tell you that revenge I long have nursed,
And now in all its crushing fury it shall burst!
How joyously shall laugh the city of Madrid
When it to-morrow learns what its fair sovereign did!
Ha! You have exiled *me;* and *you* I will dethrone!
For wife you offered me a servant of your own! [*Laughs.*
I give you, in return, my lackey for a spouse
Whom you can take, and then (the King once gone) can house
Right royally! In his fond heart your wealth you'll see!
You made a Duke of him [*laughs*], so Duchess you will be! [*Grinding his teeth.*
Ha, you have ground me down! have crushed me 'neath your feet!
And peacefully have slept!—Now my revenge is sweet!
[*Whilst he has been speaking,* RUY BLAS *has gone noiselessly to the doors, and has locked them. He has then crept softly up behind* SALLUST, *and just as he finishes his harangue to* THE QUEEN *with fury and triumph in his eyes,* RUY BLAS *suddenly grasps* SALLUST'S *sword, and withdraws it from the sheath.*

RUY BLAS (*in a terrible voice, sword in hand*).

You grossly have insulted your most noble Queen!
[SALLUST *turns to the doors.* RUY BLAS *bars the passage.*
Turn not: the doors are locked, as plainly can be seen.
Yes, Satan until now has been your guide and guard;
But would he rescue you, the conflict must be hard!
My turn has come! The serpent that besets our path
We readily will crush with concentrated wrath!
No soul can hither come; no fiend from thine own hell!
Writhe as you will, my iron grip shall hold you well!
This man spoke insolently to you, madame; I

[*To* The Queen.] Will now explain to you the single
reason why:
He has no soul! A monster in the human form
Is he! But yesterday, when with my feelings warm,
I spoke to him, he trampled on my bruised heart!
And mockingly requested me to do my part
As menial, and close a window. More I prayed:
More crushing was the freezing, heartless part he played.
[*To* Sallust.] In these last moments, count the pangs
that you may feel;
To me they would seem naught, did you them all reveal!
What were my own! Durst you believe that I could bear
To witness her deep pain! Hark you! whate'er his
sphere,
A man when he commits some monstrous, hideous crime
Forfeits all sympathy. Each one may, at the time
With contumely his sentence spit into his face,
And of his hateful presence purge the human race!
A lackey now, I will be executioner!

THE QUEEN.

Say not you 'll strike the blow!

RUY BLAS.

Madame, if I refer
To what must be, my hard and adverse fate I blame!
[*Pushing* Sallust *towards the cabinet.*
'T is said. My lord, go there and pray, in Heaven's name.

DON SALLUST.

This is assassination!

RUY BLAS.

Think you so?

DON SALLUST (*looking anxiously round*).

Nowhere
A weapon to be seen! [*To* RUY BLAS.] A sword! It
is but fair!

RUY BLAS.

Marquis, you mock me! Am I then a gentleman?
A duel? Fie! fie! I 'm but a servant. As such, can
I fight with you? I 'm one of those you strike, you kill,
If so it pleases you; but now it is my will
To slay you for a *villain*, like a dog!

THE QUEEN.

For him
Oh, mercy! mercy!

RUY BLAS (*to* THE QUEEN, *seizing* SALLUST).

Madame, from this justice grim
I pray you turn, Angel for demon cease to plead!

THE QUEEN (*falling on her knees*).

Grace! mercy!

DON SALLUST (*calling out*).

Aid there! aid!

RUY BLAS (*raising the sword*).

Those cries no ears will heed.

DON SALLUST (*struggling with* RUY BLAS).

I die assassinated! Demon!

RUY BLAS (*pushing him into the cabinet*).

Punished! Yes!
[*They disappear into the cabinet, and the door closes on them.*

THE QUEEN (*falling exhausted into a fauteuil*).

Heaven!

[*A pause, and then re-enter* RUY BLAS, *pale and unarmed.*

SCENE IV.

THE QUEEN, RUY BLAS. RUY BLAS *staggers a few paces towards* THE QUEEN, *who remains cold and impassive in the chair. He falls on his knees, and appears afraid to raise his eyes from the ground to her face.*

RUY BLAS (*in a deep and solemn voice*).

I must now tell — and neither more nor less —
The simple truth, dear madame. I will not approach
Your royal person nearer; nor will I encroach
Upon you farther than to beg you will believe
I am less guilty than I seem. Pray you receive
With mercy what I state. My soul is not so vile
As this curs'd treason shows. My love did me beguile
E'en to my ruin. Yes, my fault, I grant, was great;
But I have expiated it. It is too late
To say how much I loved you.

THE QUEEN.

Sir!

RUY BLAS.

Be not alarmed;
I go not near your Majesty, and am but charmed
Into this revelation point by point. To-day
I rushed about the town in madness and dismay,
Because such peril threatened. Frequently the eyes
Of passers-by looked on me with unfeigned surprise.
I am not truly vile! Once, near an hospital

Founded by you, I felt a hand upon me fall,
And gently dry the sweat-drops on my maddened brow!
It was a woman of the people! See me now!
I crave for pity! — My worn heart is broken!

THE QUEEN.

What
Seek you of me?

RUY BLAS.

Your pardon!

THE QUEEN.

Pardon! I could not
Forgive.

RUY BLAS.

Could not?

THE QUEEN.

No, never!

RUY BLAS.

Never!

[*Starts up, seizes the phial on the table and drains it.*

Out then spark!
It is full time.

THE QUEEN (*rushing to him*).

What dost thou?

RUY BLAS (*putting back the empty phial*).

Nothing. 'T will be dark
Ere long. You curse me, and I bless you in return, —
That 's all.

THE QUEEN (*wildly*).

Don Cæsar!

RUY BLAS.

Can I think that you now burn
With anger, and yet loved —

THE QUEEN.

What philter did you take?
Speak to me! Tell me! Cæsar! Cæsar! for the sake
Of her who loves and pardons you!

RUY BLAS.

Madame — alas!
Call me not by that name!

THE QUEEN (*throwing her arms round him*).

I pardon you, Ruy Blas,
But tell me what you've done? Speak! speak, I now command!
It is not poison, that dread liquor? See! I stand
In horror of your answer!

RUY BLAS.

Yes, 't is poison; but
Joy is now radiant in me! 'T is no longer shut,
That portal of delight!

[*Holds* THE QUEEN *in his embrace, and looks up.*

O Heaven! thou hast been
All merciful! The lackey now can bless the Queen
That she hath thus consoled a heart, long crucified,
That beat but for her love, and with her pity died!

THE QUEEN.

Poisoned! I then have killed you! Oh, I love you! Yes!
Would I had pardoned sooner!

RUY BLAS (*sinking down*).

I should not the less
Have done the deed! — I could not live.
[*His voice becomes fainter.* THE QUEEN *supports him in her arms.*

Farewell! — Oh fly
From here! — All will be secret! —

THE QUEEN.

Ruy Blas!

RUY BLAS (*with a last effort*).

Thanks. — I die!

THE END.

TORQUEMADA.

PART I.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Torquemada.
Don Sancho de Salinas.
Donna Rose d' Orthez.
Gil, Marquis de Fuentel.
Ferdinand, King.
Alexander IV., Pope.
Francis de Paula.
Gucho, *buffoon.*
The Prior.
The Bishop of Seo d' Urgel.

Monks, Soldiers

TORQUEMADA.

ACT I.

THE IN PACE.

SCENE. — *Catalonia Mountains, on the border. The Laterran Monastery, an Augustinian convent belonging to the observance of Saint Ruf.*

The old convent cemetery, looking wild and uncared for. It is the month of April in the south of Europe. There are flowers, and the sun shines brightly. Crosses and tombs scattered along the turf and under the trees. The soil is broken up with graves. In the back-ground, the wall enclosing the monastery, very high, but falling into ruin. It is split by a wide gap reaching to the ground, and the country is seen in the distance. In an angle near a part of the wall, an iron cross planted above a grave.

Another very high cross, with the mystic triangle, gilt, is placed on the summit of a stone pedestal, and commands the cemetery.

In the fore-ground, close to the soil, a square opening, encircled by flat stones on a level with the grass. Beside it is seen a long slab apparently intended to close the opening at need. In the opening the first steps of a narrow stone staircase are distinguished, which descends and is lost in a vault. It is a sepulchre from which the cover has been taken, allowing the interior to be seen. The slab close by is the cover.

On the rising of the curtain, THE PRIOR *of the convent, in the Augustinian habit, is on the scene. A monk is passing silently across the back-ground. He is old, and clad in the Dominican robe. He walks slowly, bending the knee before every cross he meets, and disappears.* THE PRIOR *is alone.*

SCENE I.

[THE PRIOR *of the convent, then* A MAN. THE PRIOR, *bald, with a tonsure of grey hair, white beard, and drugget robe. He examines the wall, and moves pensively among the tombs.*

THE PRIOR.

A convent badly kept! A tangled waste
Of briar and brush, — such desolation Time,
Old renegade, in holy places works.
[*He examines the breach in the wall.*
Through yonder gap a novice might get free.
'T would seem as if, tired of its lengthened ward,
This rampart now refuses further service.
Ah, well! in this its ruin but depicts
Our crumbling rights that also suffer blight, —
Our rights, through which a yawning gap is forced.
The branch divine grows withered in the hand
That erst received it green. Our sluggard popes
Shrink from the battle's brunt. To-day, alas!
The cloister has no sanctity for princes.
Dark as the shadow from the eagle's wings,
They pass above our heads. We meet no more
The reverence deep of old. No charter now
Comes to us as a gift from royal hands.
Lower we ever stoop, — for fear of blows!
Nay more, we are not sure but that our halls
Are nests where courtiers hatch their vile intrigues.
To bring their princelets up they force us too,
Hid from the gaze of men, both boys and girls;
Bastards, perhaps, — who knows? — and we obey.
[*He pauses in front of the entrance to the vault.*

We are the victims of the very courts
That meet within our walls, and we alone.
[*He stands gazing on the wall.*
And, like ourselves, our ancient fabric totters.
Christ bleeds; we grope in shadow. All our steps
Are set in shame and darkness —
[A MAN *enters the breach, muffled in a cloak, with his hat pulled down over his eyes. He stops on reaching the pile of stones in the breach.* THE PRIOR *perceives him.*

THE PRIOR.

Man, begone!

THE MAN.

No.

THE PRIOR.

Get thee hence! This is a graveyard, clown.

THE MAN.

Eh, well, what then?

THE PRIOR.

A famous cloister.

THE MAN.

Bah!

THE PRIOR.

No one comes hither save the monks alone,
When daylight shines; and in the night, the dead,
Wrapped in their winding-sheets. Whoever else
Dares to intrude, no mercy need expect, —
If duke, the axe; if commoner, the cord.
The monks alone have right of entrance here.
Beware! — (*with a haughty smile*).
Unless, perchance, thou art the King.

THE MAN.

I am.

THE PRIOR.

You are the King!

THE MAN.

Yes, so men call me.

THE PRIOR.

How prove you this?

THE MAN.

Why, thus.

[*He makes a sign. A troop of soldiers appears at the breach.* THE KING *points to* THE PRIOR.

Hang me that man.

[*The Soldiers enter and surround* THE PRIOR. *Enter with them* THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL *and* GUCHO.

THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL *with a grey beard, dressed in the rich costume of a Knight of Alcantara.* GUCHO, *the dwarf, dressed in black, with cap and bells. He holds two bawbles with both hands, one in gold in the form of a man, the other in copper in the form of a woman.*

SCENE II.

THE PRIOR, THE KING, THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL, GUCHO, *escort of* THE KING.

THE PRIOR (*falling on his knees*).

Pardon, my liege!

THE KING.

I grant it on condition.
What are you in this convent?

THE PRIOR.

Prior.

THE KING.

Take heed.
Inform me fully on what passes here.
Speak falsely and the gibbet is your doom;
If true your words, your pardon stands; and now,
Marquis, before beginning, let us pray.
[*He flings his cloak to a lackey, behind, and appears in the undress habit of Alcantara. A large rosary hangs from his girdle. He recites the rosary for some minutes in silence, and then turns again to* THE MARQUIS.
The Queen is far from here. I feel alive.
To be alone 's delicious. Still, to be
A widower would be better yet. The thought
Moves me to laughter.

GUCHO (*on the ground, doubled up at a corner of a tomb with the two bawbles in his arms*).

And the wide world weeps.

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS).

It is my will that you should know the motives
That urge me to examine for myself
This cloister's mode of living. Follow me.
[*He makes a sign to* THE MARQUIS *to come a little aside, near the tomb where* GUCHO *has squatted.*

THE MARQUIS.

I hear my sovereign.

GUCHO (*aside*).

And I hear the wind
That murmurs high above the things you do.

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS).

I want your guidance in some secret things.

GUCHO (*aside*).

What is it to me! While I can eat and sleep
Why, all is well!

THE MARQUIS (*to* THE KING).

Shall we send Gucho hence?

THE KING.

No need. He understands us not. (*To* GUCHO.)
Lie there.

[GUCHO *makes himself as small as he can in the shadow of* THE KING, *who approaches* THE MARQUIS.

Marquis, my love for woman has no bounds;
That you are vicious also pleases me, —
Or were. With age you have religious grown.
And, Marquis, that is well. 'T is faith alone
Gives man his value and blots out his stains.

[*He makes the sign of the cross.*

THE MARQUIS.

The convent that your Majesty inspects
Two patrons has, one living at Cahors,
And one at Ghent.

THE KING.

If rumour tells the truth,
You have not been a stranger to intrigues,
Nor are you now; and pretty women have
In by-gone days run danger for your sake.
'T is said that you were once a charming page, —
A fact that now may seem impossible.
But why? The morning smiles for all, and then
The day grows dark; it is the general law.
You have not heard a story that is told
Of a court lackey who might have been you?
You never called yourself Goryona?

THE MARQUIS.

Never!
Why should I do so?

THE KING.

Oh, they say it was
To mask your craft, and guide and help you on
To win a princess's favours.

THE MARQUIS.

No, 't is false!

THE KING.

The story I have heard entire concerns
A stupid King to whom you gave an heir;
But in what land it happened, none agree.
A fable very likely.

THE MARQUIS.

Sire, it is.
You made me Count, and so they wish me harm.

THE KING.

Not without cause. But whether true or false
What men may say of you, as for myself
I have for law to stand supreme above
All that the minds of men can body forth.
Nothing can touch me, for I am the King!
The vileness of the source from which you sprung,
Your fellowship with lackeys and buffoons,
Your tortuous windings, writhings in the dark,
Are what I like. No one can tell the name
Your father bore, — not even yourself. And I
Admire the skill of him who braves the eyes
Of all the world, yet hides himself from all.
For life like yours, so vagrant and enslaved,
A basilisk's cave or nest of cormorant

Would seem a fitting starting-point. Yet I
Have made you Count, a grandee of Castile,
And Marquis, — honours though ill-got well-won.
Cunning and force you use with equal skill.
You would out-talk a council of the Church,
Or, failing, scatter it, though the devil was there.
You can be daring, and yet full of wiles;
And, formed to crawl, you boldly front the storm.
Nay, for some giddy whim you 'd run a risk,
And grasp the sword in your old age again.
The evil you advise you would not do.
Of nothing innocent, of nothing guilty, —
Such is your nature, Count; and I believe
You can do anything, — ay, even love,
And that sincerely. First you turned, they say,
From lackey to brigand, to courtier next.
Smiling I watch your crafty stratagems.
To view a reptile wind and crawl along
Yields me a sort of pleasure. So your schemes,
Unwound in thoughtful silence, filaments
That float awhile and then are lost in night,
Your talents, fortunes, wit, and baseness, — all
Combine to form a something sinister,
Strange, and disgusting which I like to use.

THE MARQUIS.

My liege, the Tagus, Ebro, Guadalquivir
You hold in fee; and Naples now obeys
Your sovereign will as freely as Castile.
The King of France lies vanquished in the lists;
Already Africa has felt your power;
And where the sun rises above Algiers
The lengthening shadow of my King extends.
Your birthplace, Sos, close bordering on Navarre,
Gives you some right to rule that kingdom, which

You seized while sleeping in your cradle. Kings
Are never born but that some wonder happens.
Although a Catholic king you placed your foot
Upon the Church, within whose breast ferment
Some germs republican; and, thanks to you,
Before the King the sovereign pontiff trembles,
Before your towers his belfries hold their peace.
From Etna to the Ganges wave your flags.
Gonzalo of Cordova leads your troops;
And yet without his aid you win great battles.
You swayed kings like a greybeard, in your teens;
And when you send some priest to row your galleys,
Rome, stammering, unsays her wrathful curse.
Oh, conqueror of Toro! King! I feel
How impotent the words I utter are!
You are so great, and I so very small.
I am devoted to you, sire —

THE KING.

'T is false.

THE MARQUIS.

My liege —

THE KING.

Oh, bore me not with your devotion!
To you I am unknown; while you to me
Are not quite clear. Meanwhile we play our parts, —
I, of good prince, and you, of honest man.
At heart we really detest each other.
I loathe the lackey, you abhor the king.
You would assassinate me if you could;
And I some day, perhaps, shall have your head.
Till then we are good friends —

[THE MARQUIS *opens his mouth to protest.*

A truce to words,
My courtier friend. I hate you; you hate me.

In me lies darkness, black desires in you.
Each keeps his own abyss within himself.
We pierce each other somewhat. Windows dim
Allow some knowledge of our evil hearts.
Your love, old traitor, your devotedness,
Excite my laughter. But until the day
You can no longer from my pouch draw gold,
And while your interest, the surest bond,
Brings us together, I will seek your aid,
Knowing full well the wickeder you are
The better service you can render me.
Down with your mask and mine! It is my will
To speak the truth. An insult none would dare
To offer me, I, Marquis, offer all.
At least I can be frank when arrant knaves
Are witness to my words. If trembling truth
Flies from the prince's ear, his mouth will hold her.
And you shall prove by your base, faltering tongue
Your King is candid, and his lackey lies.
Now let us talk —

THE MARQUIS.

But —

THE KING.

Ah, what bondage 't is
To be a king! And to be flushed with youth,
On fire with riot and tumultuous hate,
Hot-headed, mocking, boiling with ardent life,
A hurricane of passions at the heart,
To be a blending dark of blood and fire
And powder, and with sudden whims that match
The flashes of the thunder-bolt; to wish
To make a trial of all things in life,
All things to sully and all things to seize;
To thirst for woman, hunger after pleasure;

To see no virgin, no forbidden thing,
Without the fell desire of snapping at it!
To feel oneself a man from head to heel,
And after all, in some magnificent night,
To listen pallid to a voice that cries
With ceaseless repetition: "Be a phantom!"
To be not even a king, alas! — to be
A kingdom! and to feel that in yourself
A hideous medley formed of states and towns
Usurps the place your instincts, will, desires,
Should fill, while towers and provinces and walls
Lie crossing one another in your bowels!
To gaze upon the map and say, "'T is I;
You see me there! Girona is my heel,
Alcala is my head:" and to behold
An appetite that takes an empire's shape
Grow daily in my soul; to feel the flow
Of mighty streams across me, and the seas
That hem you in within their bitter folds;
To bear the stifling torture of the flame
The waves conceal, and have your gloomy soul
Infiltered by the world. And then my wife, —
A monster nothing moves, whose slave I am.
In sombre glare, because she is so high,
We live our lonely lives; and when together,
We are at once omnipotent and sad,
Feeling a chill whene'er we touch each other.
God on some dun and tragic height has placed,
Above the Algarves, Jaën, Arragon,
The Castiles, Burgos, and Leon, two worms
Two masks, two nullities, — a king and queen.
The one is terror, and the other fear.
Ah, yes, it would be sweet to be a king,
If that, in sooth, the tyrant did not feel
The burthen of the tyranny himself!

But to be always on our guard, and eye
Each other with a look that masks the soul, —
Two dumb and pallid statues, both remote
Alike from tears and smiles! Urraca lives
In her again, again in me Alonzo;
A man of stone beside a wife of bronze!
The people, prostrate, grovel at our feet
In awe-struck adoration; and yet we,
The while their benedictions mount from earth,
Feel in ourselves that we are both accursed.
The incense tremulous ascends and forms
A shadow, in which indistinctly blend
The idols, Ferdinand and Isabel.
The brightness of our twin thrones is confused.
We see each other vaguely through a mist;
And when we speak, the grave unbars its door.
I am not very sure she is not dead.
She is a tyrant, and not less a corpse,
And I must freeze her when our crossing hands
Do clasp a mutual sceptre, as if God
Did with a fillet bind a mummy's hand
Entwined with fingers of a skeleton!
And yet for all I live! That stilted ghost
Is not my real self. Oh, no! oh, no!
So when I can, I flee this crushing greatness, —
Escape, and get outside the royal skin,
And, like a dragon that uncoils itself
And rears its crest towards the sun, I feel
The monstrous upgrowth of awakening life.
Mad as the tempest or the hurricane
With frenzy, I, grim captive of a throne,
Break loose, and shaking off the yoke, I rush
In wild intoxication through all things,
And try all fortunes, good and bad alike;
My single aim, to be the animal.

I trample on my royal mantle, and
My soul expands until her bounds extend
To vices, songs, and orgies of the night,
I view my growing lusts and sprouting nails, —
I who at once am prisoner, martyr, king.
A bishop's crosier and a woman's shame
Lash me alike to madness, and I am
Ferocious and infuriate and gay.
The man that seethes within me, flame and slime,
By changing to a demon gets revenge
For being once the spectre that he was!
[*Pensive.*] And yet, but for a moment free, to-morrow
Again a ghost and shadow I become!
[*To* THE MARQUIS.] Colossuses by atoms are not pierced,
And so thou dost not understand why I
Do thus unblushingly show forth myself
Before the eyes of men. But I know well
That all to whom I so unfold myself
Tremble the more, the more I play the cynic;
And 't is my joy, while laughing in their midst,
By baring to their gaze my shameless soul,
To render them even viler than they are.
And I, who was but King, feel I am free
When I discard all reverence and shame.
Thou dost not understand me, and dost grow
More terrified. 'T is well. When my cold gaze
Meets thine to-morrow, thou wilt trembling stand,
And doubt, and think that it was sure a dream,
This drunkness into which I plunge myself
Before thee now, this seething caldron where
My past, my rank and power flame up and boil
Beneath thine eyes, and which I shall leave — frozen!
[*He takes his chaplet again.*
And now to end our prayers.

GUCHO (*aside, looking slyly at* THE KING).

Well done! Yes, pray!

THE KING.

And then this monk I 'll question.

GUCHO (*watching him as he prays, aside*).

Mummery!
That is the style in which this King will end!
Knavish and harsh, he has no faith in aught;
And still — such chaos is his gloomy soul! —
He says a pater and becomes a fool.
At such a moment to the Pope he yields,
And venerates a council. Though he give
Some hard knocks to the priest, he fears him still;
He feels he is but dust beneath the feet
Of some proud monk like yonder passer-by.
[*Making the sign of the cross.*
Amen! He is a shameless knave, a liar,
A crafty, cruel wretch, obscene and godless,
But Catholic! a name — worse come to worst! —
By which he will be later known.

[THE KING *again hangs his rosary to his belt and makes a sign to* THE PRIOR *to approach.*

THE KING (*to* THE PRIOR).

Come here.

[THE PRIOR *advances, his hand crossed on his breast and his eyes bent on the ground.*

If by ill luck thy answers miss the truth,
And are not frank and full, look to thyself!

[THE PRIOR *bows.*

The truth, Beware!

[*A few moments before this, the monk, clad in the garb of a Dominican, has re-appeared at the back of the thea-*

tre. He walks with bent head, regardless of everything, and solely engaged in saluting all the crosses of the tombs before which he passes. He seems to be muttering prayers. He is noticed by THE KING, *who points him out to* THE PRIOR.

And first, who is that monk
With haggard eyes, not clad like thee, who kneels
Each time he meets a cross?

THE PRIOR.

He is insane.

THE KING.

How pale he looks!

THE PRIOR.

With fast and watching he
Wears out his strength. He speaks aloud, and walks
Bare-headed in the sun, and raves and rants.
He has a craze about confronting popes,
And telling them on bended knee their duty.
We must be silent when he passes by.
He is not of our order, and is here
Under our watch and ward; for thus all priests
Are shut up in our convents who may be
Too restless or too learned, dreamers who
Might preach some doctrine which our Spanish church
Disowns.

THE KING.

What is the nature of his madness?

THE PRIOR.

He thinks his eyes see fire, the devil, and hell.
He 's but a short time here.

THE KING.

He 's old.

THE PRIOR.

He is,
And has, I fancy, not much time to live.
[*The monk passes and disappears without seeing anybody.*

GUCHO (*gazing at his bawbles, aside*).

I have two bawbles. One is gold and one
Is copper; Evil one is called, and Good
The other. I love both with equal love.
I have no aim. [*He observes the turf on the graves.*
Down yonder there are flowers,
And yonder withered leaves.

THE KING (*to* THE PRIOR).

The discipline
That ought to guide your convents, monk, has grown
Exceeding lax.

THE PRIOR.

My liege —

THE KING.

And it is said
That women are no strangers in your cloisters.

THE PRIOR.

We 're neighbour to a convent in which dwell
The Ursulines. They are our flock; we are —

THE KING.

The goats, no doubt, that guard the sheep.

THE PRIOR (*bowing*).

My liege —

GUCHO (*aside*).

Each women's convent has for confessors
The monks that live close by, who make the sin,

And then absolve it; reigning o'er these hearts,
They rob them of their virtue, then restore
Their innocence. A pleasant miracle!

THE PRIOR.

The sons of Levi, King, and Sion's daughters —

THE KING.

Lived happily together. Still I will
Be rigorous, and Rome shall know —

THE PRIOR (*bowing*).

My liege!

GUCHO (*aside*).

When at the cloister's gate, where Jesus reigns
No longer, little Cupid comes to knock,
Pope Sixtus, who two children had, can't scold
If they should set the door ajar.

THE KING (*to* THE PRIOR).

And Rome
Stands ready to inflict a chastisement
For which the times seem ripe.
[*Looking fixedly at* THE PRIOR.] Within your walls
At present dwells the Bishop of Urgel, —
I have been warned 't is so, —
[THE PRIOR *bends his head.*] With power entire
To punish.

THE PRIOR (*with a new reverence*).

But, my liege, his power extends
To dogma only, and to errors which
Require repression, — nothing more than this.

THE MARQUIS (*in a low tone to* THE KING).

Your eyes see far, my liege.

THE KING (*in a low tone to* THE MARQUIS).

I chose to see.

[*The eyes of* THE KING *are arrested by the subterranean vault, open at some steps from him.*

Monk, what is this?

THE PRIOR.

It is an open tomb.

THE KING.

An open tomb!

THE PRIOR.

It is, my liege.

THE KING.

For whom?

THE PRIOR.

None know but God the moment when man falls.

THE KING.

Whose tomb is this?

[THE PRIOR *keeps silent.* THE KING *becomes urgent.*

Tell me, at once, I say.

THE PRIOR.

I know not. It awaits [*after a silence*], perhaps, myself;
Perhaps it waits for you.

THE MARQUIS (*in* THE KING'S *ear*).

When in a cloister
'T is felt some monk has reached a higher level,
Whether in good or evil, than his fellows,
He is suppressed.

THE KING (*in a low tone*).

It proves their sense, in truth,
To kill in such a case.

THE MARQUIS.

Oh, no! The Church
Recoils from bloodshed. He is buried merely.

THE KING.

I understand.

THE MARQUIS.

In this secluded spot,
Cry out! Why, none will hear. Resist! 'T is vain.
No helper will be nigh.
[*Showing the hole, where a staircase is distinguished, and then the flag close to it.*
The man is pushed
Down step by step until he reach the bottom.
And when he touches that, yon stone is placed
Above his head, and night forever fills
His eyelids, hiding from him woods and skies,
And men and waters. Living —

THE KING.

He is dead.
The thing is simple, truly.

THE MARQUIS.

If he likes,
He dies. The Church has not shed blood.
[*A nod of approval on the part of* THE KING

THE KING (*aloud, looking into the garden of the convent*)

In spite
Of all this monk may say, 't is certain women —

THE PRIOR.

Come not within our walls.

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS).

How he does lie!

I see one now!

[*He gazes into the depths of the garden, and continues.*

And by her side a youth,
A charming, beardless boy, all but a child,
Bright-eyed and slender-shaped —

THE PRIOR.

She is, my liege,
A princess.

THE KING.

And the youth?

THE PRIOR.

My liege, a prince.

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS, *in a low voice*).

I have done well to come.

THE PRIOR.

The rule *Magnates* —

[*Saluting* THE KING.

We are the subjects of Viscount d' Orthez —

THE KING.

And mine as well.

THE PRIOR (*continuing*).

Allows us to receive
One of a princely house.

THE KING.

And even two, —
A female and a male.

THE PRIOR (*bowing in the direction to which the finger of* THE KING *points*).

She is a countess

THE MARQUIS (*in a low voice to* THE KING).

The King of France is bishop in a land
He does not rule. The Viscount of Orthez,
Cahors, and Dax resembles him in this;
For, though a layman, yet, as being prince,
He is a cleric, and while battling yonder
Among his subjects, and while crying out:
"Brave troopers, forward! Forward, men-at-arms!"
He 's cardinal-deacon, abbot of this convent.

THE KING (*laughing*).

Churchman in Spain, and man of war in France.

THE MARQUIS (*pointing to the two persons whom* THE KING *saw outside the theatre*).

And if yon lusty blade finds here his mate,
The reason is that, for some scheme or other,
Our Viscount placed these hearts among the flowers
And in the shadow, side by side, concealed.

THE KING (*seriously*).

Some scheme or other? No, I see his aim,—
A marriage. [*To* THE PRIOR.] Pray, how long have they been here?

THE PRIOR.

Since they were children.

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS).

And have grown up both
Within this stifling priory? [*To* THE PRIOR.] Their
names?

THE PRIOR.

The one is the infanta Rose d' Orthez.

THE KING.

And the infante.

THE PRIOR.

Sancho de Salinas.

[THE MARQUIS *starts, and looks eagerly in the direction in which* THE KING *has perceived the infanta and infante.*

THE KING (*with increasing seriousness*).

Of Burgos he 's the heir; she, of Orthez.

THE PRIOR (*making a sign in the affirmative*).

He 's rightful lord of lands that even reach
The Tagus.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Burgos! Sancho de Salinas!
Could this be possible?

THE KING (*to* THE PRIOR).

Continue. Yes,
All this was planned in secret. Sancho is
My cousin. Still, I thought the eldest branch
Extinct.

THE PRIOR.

Not so. Don Sancho has been kept
In secret here. He has been sent to us
To be brought up along with Orthez's niece.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

And yet I thought them dead. A marvellous
Disclosure this, which I half comprehend.
That boy concealed! It surely must be he!
I feel a sudden rending of the heart.
A wondrous tale, indeed!

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS).

'T was wise to choose
This lonely convent.

THE PRIOR.

Soon the Countess, who
To the infante lately pledged her troth,
Shall be his bride. From the same ancestor
They 're both descended, and that ancestor
A saint, whose aid we daily here invoke.
His son, Loup Centulle, was a Gascon duke.
From him came Luke, King of Bigorre; from him,
The King of Barège, John; next after him,
The Viscount Peter; then Gaston the Fifth —

THE KING.

Be brief.

THE PRIOR.

To-day the reigning Cardinal-Viscount wills
That we, as far as in our power lies,
Shall keep them hidden in our cloisters.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Sancho!

THE KING (*pointing to the young man whom he has perceived, but who is not seen by the audience*).

A handsome fellow this! Pray, Marquis, look!

[THE MARQUIS *looks in the direction designated by* THE KING *with a sort of terrified intentness.*

THE PRIOR (*looking in the same direction*).

He has the right of keeping in his train
A guard of fifty soldiers, all hidalgos,
Commanded by an abbot. When he goes
To church he sits within the altar rails;
Peñacerrada is his capital.
But as it seems, some fatal shadow frowned
Upon his birth. None, sire, save me alone,
Know that he is infante and the heir.
He knows it not himself, and, for like cause,
The infanta Rose is unaware she is
A princess. It is clear that some one 's feared.

THE KING.

By heavens! I, the King, might well be wroth
When such a game as this is played.
[*To* THE PRIOR, *always looking outside.*] They wear
A robe of serge like yours.

THE PRIOR.

Because they both
Are to the Virgin consecrated, else
We could not keep them in the convent, sire.
They even took their vows as novices
In presence of the chapter.

THE KING.

Ah! Why, then,
He 's very near a monk, and she a nun!

THE PRIOR.

Yes, but they shall have dispensations such
As princes have, and so they can be married.

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS).

Then I, the wolf, enter the sheepfold, and
Can spoil it all. [*Pensive, aside.*] Look to it, Cardinal!
So thou wouldst trick me, aged demon, who
Hast caused these angels to grow up together!
Adore each other, children, tenderly!
The plot against me I shall surely shape
To my good uses. Yes! Let Rose and Sancho
In wedlock join! That will subserve my turn.
Thou wilt, my Viscount, by a marriage that
Unites my cousin to thy niece, rob me
Of Burgos through Salinas? It is well
I yield compliance. Now our rights are equal.
But, like thyself, I do not care to part
With what is mine. And I, by Orthez, mean
To take from thee Navarre Through her I hold thee,
As thou dost me through him So therefore let
This marriage be performed I am well pleased
To-day the bridal, the assault to-morrow! [*Looking outside.*
She is a lovely girl! [*Pensive.*] The way to reign
Triumphant is to use the secret springs
Your enemy employs, for your own weal,
And use them in a careless, drowsy fashion.
An intrigue, thwarted thus, becomes your servant.
The arm would slay you turns aside and fails.
The stupid dagger strikes the place you wish,
And your assassin changes to your slave.
[*Again gazing outside.*
What are they saying? I must listen.

[*He proceeds to the back of the theatre and disappears among the trees.*

GUCHO (*aside, looking at* THE KING *as he goes out*).

Spy!

[*As soon as* THE KING *has left,* THE MARQUIS *beckons imperiously to* THE PRIOR *to draw near him.*

SCENE III.

The same, except THE KING; THE MARQUIS, THE PRIOR, *who are supposed to be inaudible to the other performers. They are at the front of the stage.*

THE MARQUIS.

Come hither, priest!

THE PRIOR (*approaching submissively*).

My humble service.

[*He makes a profound reverence to* THE MARQUIS.

THE MARQUIS.

Thou
Hast not informed the King of all.

THE PRIOR.

The Lord
Alone is master, and whate'er the priest
May in confession learn, he must not tell.

THE MARQUIS.

A fiction that. Has it not been declared
By Paul the Second that in cases grave
All things may be revealed? If thou dost dare
To brave my wrath, then woe to thee, O monk!

THE PRIOR.

But swear you will be secret if I yield.

THE MARQUIS.

I swear it; nay, I will do better still;
A golden head-dress worth a hundred marks

I promise I 'll to thy madonna give,
And six huge silver candelabra which
Of equal value are.

THE PRIOR.

You shall know all.
What time, my lord, both you and I were young,
The Princess, Donna Sancha of Portugal,
For whom our prayers are offered every fast,
Gave to her wedded lord, the King of Burgos,
An heir whose father was the page, Gorvona.
The King, who held in great esteem his wife,
Believed the child his own, and so of right
This bastard did become legitimate,
Succeeded to the crown and all its powers
Then married, died, and left an only son,
Who met, it was believed, a sudden death
While yet a child. But no, he was, in truth,
Abducted by the Cardinal-Viscount, who
Had seized and hidden in his fief of Bearn
The little king, Don Sancho.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Yes, 't is clear.
I guessed aright.

[*Gazing outside while* THE PRIOR *is muttering prayers*

It is my child! the son
Of mine own son! Great God! I scarcely dare
Believe it yet. I feel awake within
My bosom something I knew not was there, —
A heart! O sacred lightning flash! O swift,
Subduing shock! I who once hated, love!
My son! my son! Oh, I am drunk with joy!
A joy that for the present, almost kills me.
O blest release! Now I have burst my bonds!
I lived for evil; I will live for good.

My blackened conscience prowled as does the wolf.
I thought I had lost all, and have found all!
I am a father, grandsire! O my God!
And from below I can henceforward look
With smiles upon the radiant heights above,
Can cast a furtive glance toward the peak
On which shall grow this glorious lily, sprung
From out my dunghill, and say, "'T is my son!"
And oh, to live anew myself! I feel
This child, enrobed in all his radiance, comes
Into the turbid mist that girds me round,
And that his fresh young soul the owner is
Of this vile withered heart, so that there is
Within myself a watchful innocence
That I can trust for guidance and support.
I am another man, and weep and pray,
And on my sinful night there breaks the dawn!
This light is mine! this artless boy is mine!
Art thou at last, then, merciful, O God!
Thou dark, unknown existence? Even I,
The prompter of this King who sets his feet
Upon his victims; I, the light by which
His foulness walks; I, courtier of his crimes,
Know that a soft hand wipes away my stains.
Yes, I, his hideous henchman, breathe at last,
And raise my head again — alas! weighed down
By dire remorse! — Yes, I can breath again,
Uncursed of God! I am no more alone;
I live, I love! O dazzling thought! Alas!
He has but me, and I have only him.
What gulfs surround him! What unnumbered snares!
But I shall watch. [*Pensive.*] For him the light, for me
The gloom. The cloak in which I wrap myself
Must not be cast aside. A faint surmise
As to the father would destroy the son.

[*He returns to* THE PRIOR.

THE PRIOR (*in a low voice*).

You promised secrecy, my lord.

THE MARQUIS.

The pledge,
Be sure, I 'll keep. When does Don Sancho quit
His refuge here?

THE PRIOR.

The child, who was thought dead,
Is now a man. My lord, the Cardinal
Thinks to make use of him, and will, when he
Is husband of his niece, declare him king,
And prince and highness.

[*He casts a look behind.* THE KING *appears at the back.*

Lo! the King!

THE MARQUIS.

The King!

[*Aside, speaking to himself.*

Old man, take care to screen from this King's eyes
The heart unhoped for that has flowered in thee.

THE PRIOR (*in a low voice*).

Protect us. And God grant that nothing here
Excite his anger!

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Now, old mummer, now,
Resume thy craven mask, insensible
Alike to insult, hatred, and affront,
And call back to thy lips that abject smile.

THE PRIOR.

You pledged, my lord, the greatest secrecy.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Yes, yes, I must! [*To* THE PRIOR.] You need not fear.
Be calm.

SCENE IV.

The same. THE KING.

THE KING (*aside*).

To spy half-open hearts amuses me.
[*He looks back in the direction from which he has entered.*
[*To* THE MARQUIS.] They 're yonder. Now we leave.

THE MARQUIS.

On what have you,
Their lord and king, resolved?

THE KING.

To make them happy.
I wish them married.

THE MARQUIS.

'T is deep policy.

THE KING.

Spain, stone by stone, and step by step 's a-building.
This marriage runs concordant with my plans.
The Cardinal d' Orthez shall have my help,
His wish shall be fulfilled; and, Marquis, I
Shall have Dax and Bayonne a little after.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

O fierce and gloomy heart of mine, rejoice!
My child shall be a king!

[*At a sign from* THE KING *the escort and retinue all leave by the breach.* THE PRIOR *approaches and salutes* THE KING, *his arms crossed on his breast.*

THE KING (*to* THE PRIOR).

Monk, I have not come here —

THE PRIOR (*bowing*).

My liege

THE KING.

And thou
Hast never seen me.

THE PRIOR.

Poor, the humble monk,
And naked has —

THE KING.

I shall take care to watch
The doings in this convent.

THE PRIOR.

Where you 'll see
That in its walls your Grace's wishes meet
With prompt obedience ever. [*Aside.*] May a curse
Cleave to thee, King!

THE KING.

Your chief resides in France.

THE PRIOR.

He does, my liege.

THE KING.

The bishop of Urgel
Is here at present.

THE PRIOR.

Yes, we have the honour
To lodge a bishop on his pastoral tour.

THE KING.

He must know naught of what has taken place.

[DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *are seen at the back of the theatre. They have not perceived anything of what has occurred.* THE KING *points them out to* THE MARQUIS, *and proceeds towards the breach.*

[*To* THE MARQUIS.] Come quick! [*To* THE PRIOR.] If thy intention is to live,
Be silent. [*To* THE MARQUIS.] Come!

[THE KING *goes out,* GUCHO *follows.*

THE MARQUIS (*gazing on* DON SANCHO).

My sweet and lovely child!

SCENE V.

DON SANCHO, DONNA ROSE. DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE, *both dressed as novices, he in a white soutane, she in a veil, are running and playing among the trees. She is sixteen, he seventeen. They are chasing and flying from each other. Laughter and gaiety.* ROSE *tries to catch the butterflies.* SANCHO *gathers flowers, and is arranging a nosegay which he holds in his hand.*

DONNA ROSE.

Come this way! Look, 't is full of butterflies.

DON SANCHO.

The roses please me best.

[*He gathers some wild roses and adds them to his nosegay while looking around him.*

Oh, I am thrilled
With rapture at the sight of such sweet things!

DONNA ROSE (*admiring a butterfly*).

See yonder one that flies among the reeds!

DON SANCHO.

With perfumes and with life all things are rife!

DONNA ROSE.

Come, let us share. For you the flowers; for me
The butterflies.

DON SANCHO (*his eyes turned towards the heavens*).

The universe is filled
With something strange of tenderness and grace.
[*He continues to gather flowers for his nosegay while* DONNA ROSE *is running after the butterflies. He gazes after her earnestly.*
Rose!

DONNA ROSE (*turning and looking at the flowers he has in his hand*).

Sir! For whom do you intend these flowers?

DON SANCHO.

Well, guess.

DONNA ROSE.

For me.
[*She returns to the butterflies, and tries to catch them. They escape her. She is vexed and speaks to them.*
I think you pretty, yet
You fly away. Why so?

DON SANCHO.

They 'll lose, dear Rose,
Their colours if you touch them.
[*Musing, and gazing on the butterflies as they flit about*

One might think
He gazed on wandering kisses seeking mouths.

DONNA ROSE.

They find them, too, — the flowers.

DON SANCHO.

Then, my Rose,
Since your 're a flower —
[*He clasps her in his arm. She struggles; he kisses her.*

DONNA ROSE.

Stop, sir; 't is very wrong!

DON SANCHO.

But since we shall be married —
[DONNA ROSE *follows a butterfly with her eyes. She lies in wait for it. It rests on a flower.*

DONNA ROSE.

Look, it lights.
I must have this one. [*She approaches softly.*
[*To* DON SANCHO.] Come.

DON SANCHO (*following her very closely*).

Hush!
[*The lips of* DON SANCHO *meet the lips of* DONNA ROSE; *the butterfly escapes.*

DONNA ROSE.

Stupid man!
That don't know how to take a butterfly!

DON SANCHO.

But I have ta'en the kiss.

ROSE (*surveying the butterflies returning to the flowers*).

How daintily
They place themselves right at their ladies' feet! —
There now! They leave them, little faithless things!
[*She gazes on them as they fly.*
Why do they fly so far, and go so high?
What numberless wings are flitting through the air!
[DON SANCHO *comes gently behind her, and embraces her. She repulses him.*
A kiss before our marriage! Never, sir.
I will not have it. No.

DON SANCHO.

Then give it back.

DONNA ROSE (*smiling*).

No.

DON SANCHO.

Yes.

DONNA ROSE.

But — Ah! I love thee!

[*They embrace each other, and sit down on a tomb. She rests her head on his shoulder. Both, as if in ecstasy, follow the butterflies with their eyes.*

DON SANCHO.

Oh, how kind
And boundless is this nature which surrounds us!
Give ear, until its meaning I unfold.
From winter's gloomy sky there falls on earth
A pale and chilling winding-sheet; but when
April returns, the flowers bloom again,
The days grow long; and then the happy earth
Rewards the heavens that have protected her
With flakes of snow changed to white butterflies.
High festival is kept where mourning was,

And all the skies are blue, and trembling joy
Takes flight and mounts to God. Such is the cause
Why from the dark springs forth this rush of wings.
God opens underneath his boundless heaven
The countless hearts of men, and makes them full
Of rapture and of light; and nothing can
Refuse his bounty or disown his sway,
For everything that he has made is good!

DONNA ROSE.

Oh, how I love thee!

DON SANCHO (*passionately*).

Rose!

[*He clasps her in his arms. A butterfly passes.* DONNA ROSE *tears herself from the embrace of* DON SANCHO, *and runs after the butterfly.*

DONNA ROSE.

How beautiful!
Come, come! We must take this one. Come!

DON SANCHO.

God strews
The charms of spring around to glad thine eyes.
[*The butterfly settles on a bush.*

DONNA ROSE (*reaching her hand out to seize it*).

Not so much noise. [*The butterfly flies away.*
How wearisome he is!
He 's gone again.
[*She follows the butterfly.* DON SANCHO *follows her.*
Among the lilies.
[*The butterfly flits farther.*
Good!
He 's in the clematis.

DON SANCHO.

Since we were children
Our souls have always lived close to each other,
O my sweet wife!

[*The butterfly is farther still.*

DONNA ROSE.

He sees me!

[*The butterfly is on the wild-rose bush. She tries to seize it, and stretches out her hand, but draws it back quickly.*

Oh, the rose!
The wicked rose has pricked my finger.

DON SANCHO.

Ah!
Those bad, bad roses! That one wants to drink
The blood of angels!

[THE MONK *in the Dominican habit appears under the trees, among the tombs. He does not see them.* DONNA ROSE *perceives him.*

Ah! look, there again
Is that old monk who has so strange an air!
That man makes me afraid. Pray, come away.

[*They go out in the direction of the clumps of trees.* THE MONK *advances slowly, as if he saw nothing beyond himself. The day is beginning to wane.*

SCENE VI.

THE MONK, *alone.*

THE MONK.

Here! — man's corrupted nature, and the woe
Inherited, the princes all defiled

With abject crimes, the sages past all cure,
And lust and pride and foaming blasphemy
And murderous Sennacherib and false
Delilah, heretics, Musarabs, Jews,
Waldenses, Guebers, and those pallid fools,
The curious in algebras and ciphers,
All, all, both great and little, have befouled
Their sign baptismal, groping in the dark,
Denying Jesus, prone to wrongful deeds,
All, all! the pope and king, the bishop, priest!
And there, the infinite and awful fire!
Here, careless man, who lives and eats and sleeps.
And there, the sombre depths of glowing flame!
There, hell! — O human creature desolate!
O life and death! thou dark and twofold plain
On which our fate is staked. To laugh an hour
And afterward to weep forever! Hell!
O horrid vision! Caves, and mountain tops,
And pits of burning coal, and sulphurous peaks.
O thousand-toothed gulf! O yawning mouth!
Infinite guilt beneath the infinite hand
Of its avenger! Joy makes up one half,
And pain the other. And the scorching heat
Ne'er ceases. Hear ye not those screams! "My son!
My mother! Pardon!" The chimera, Hope,
Falls into ashes. Eyes and faces wan
Are lost awhile within the fiery shaft,
And then return to sight. The melted lead
Drops down on living skulls. A spectre world.
It tortures and it suffers; it is roofed
With hideous vaults that form the nether side
Of pitchy graveyards, pierced with points of fire
As heaven with stars at night. A ceiling dire,
In which are yawning caverns here and there.
Through them there falls, as fast as drops of rain,

Eternally a shower of human souls!
They sink into the caldrons' flaming mouths,
In nameless tortures, farther than can reach
God's pardon; night and anguish are their lot.
A dismal wind howls through the gaps, and whirls
The flames unceasing, fed by other flames.
The swollen, blazing lava fills the deep
And hollow portals. Heaven cries out: Never!
And Hell cries back: Forever! All that have,
While on this earth, by vice or idleness,
Made bad use of their time, made one false step
In drunkness, went astray, fell, sinned, or stumbled,
Though 't were but for one moment's space, is there!
O retribution dread! O headlong fall!
Impossible to doubt. What see we yonder,
Before our very eyes? — Hell visible!
Its pestilential breath comes where we stand,
From Belial's hearth there rises to our sky
The pungent, red-hot smoke his caldrons send
Through his dread chimneys, Mount Vesuvius,
And Etna, Stromboli and northern Hecla.
Of what then should we think if not of this?
We have before us yawning 'neath our earth
This mystery that spits forth flame and death.
We can lean over and can gaze within.
We can at night behold the damned afire,
See whirlwinds of them roll along like sparks,
Take flight and then fall back with fire-charred wings.
Alas! for ye no outlet and no flight!
Back! back! Regain your blazing dungeons. Back!
Become again the waves of that black sea
Of fire and chaos. Satan, outcast fell,
Above you laughs! They whirl around in fright,
Those living brands that shoot forth smoke and flame,
A spectacle of dread! — and scatter through

The fixed and limitless extent of space.
The fiery serpents lick their writhing hands;
Oil bites their limbs, and lead and pitch suck up
Their melting flesh. A darkness fathomless
Spreads o'er their heads its huge, tremendous veil.
The Infinite through all its hundred sieves
Lets nothing pass but these two awful words:
Forever! Never! — God! O God! who shall
Have pity on them? — I! Yes, I will save
Mankind. Man pardoned is the thought absorbs
My inmost being. In my soul a love
Sublime cries out. By me abyss shall strive
Against abyss. The work that Dominick
Began I shall accomplish. Hell! Ah, Hell!
How shall I make its iron roof sink down?
How shall I on its horrid steep arrest
The fall of man, O Rome! O Jesus Christ! —
The way I 've found, a way Saint Paul has shown.
The eagle, as he proudly soars aloft,
Sees all things stretch before his dazzled eyes.
To close hell's gates and open heaven again,
What needs the world? The stake. It needs
The searing of hell's fires, the conquest of
Eternity with but a moment's pain;
One lightning flash of suffering annuls
Unnumbered tortures. All the earth afire
Shall quench this sombre hell. A passing hell
That lasts but for an hour shall sweep away
The stake that is eternal. Sin is burned
Along with its vile rag of flesh. The soul
Springs from the flame refulgent, pure as snow;
For water laves the body, fire the soul.
The one is mud, the other light; and fire,
Handmaiden of heaven's chariot, alone
Makes white the soul, of which it is the sister.

To thee, immortal soul! I sacrifice
The body. Could a father hesitate?
Could a fond mother who should see her child
Hang midway 'twixt the holy stake and hell,
Reject the interchange that kills a demon
And makes anew an angel? Yes, I read
Aright the meaning of the word Redemption.
Gomorrha is eternal as is Sion.
No one can bring down from the radiant heaven
A drop of joy to fire-tormented hell.
But God at least permits to save the future!
Man is the prey of hell no more! The torch
August has come to bless. And oh, there is
No time to lose! Alas! the world grows worse;
And Jesus bleeds and dies a second time.
All men are wicked, evil, vowed to ruin.
From hour to hour shoots up some bud of sin
From that dread, fatal tree whose branches God
Drew toward himself, but which Eve bent, alas!
Again to human lips! Amongst us faith
No longer lives. On every side Beghards,
Backsliding Jews, and monks that break their vows,
And nuns that let their hair again grow long;
This one pulls down a cross, that stains a host,
And faith expires beneath its load of error,
As does the lily weighed down by the nettle.
The Pope is on his knees. In front of whom?
Of God? Of man. He is afraid of Cæsar.
Rome soon, subservient to kings, shall be
The serf of Nineveh. Another step,
And all the world is lost. But I am here,
Am here! — and with me bring the antique fervour.
In pensive sadness I am come to breathe
Upon the saving fagots. Earth, I come
To ransom, at the price of flesh, the soul.

I bear salvation and I bear relief.
Glory to God! and happiness to all!
Those rock-bound hearts shall melt. The blaze of stakes
Shall fill the world. I will fling on the winds
The cry profound of Genesis: Light! Light!
And then the splendours of the burning piles
Will shine o'er all. I 'll scatter fires abroad,
And flaming brands, and lustrous furnaces,
Until above the cities of the earth
Autos-da-fe shall blaze on every side,
Supreme and active, and diffusing round
Celestial joys! I love the human race!

[*He raises his eyes to heaven in ecstasy, with clasped hands and wide-open mouth. Behind him, from the outskirt of a kind of thicket at the back of the cemetery, issues a monk with his arms crossed on his breast and his hood pulled down over his face. Then, from another point of the copse, another monk, then another. These monks are in the Augustinian habit. They take their stand, silent and motionless, behind the Dominican monk, who does not see them. Other monks arrive successively in the same fashion, singly and in silence, and place themselves beside the first. All have their arms crossed and their hoods lowered, so as to entirely conceal their faces. After some time a semicircle is formed behind* THE DOMINICAN. *This semicircle divides, and a bishop attended by two archdeacons is seen to issue from the trees with cope on back, crosier in hand, and mitre on head. It is* THE BISHOP OF SEO D'URGEL. *He advances slowly, followed by* THE PRIOR, *who, alone of the monks, has the hood raised.* THE BISHOP, *without saying a word, stations himself in the centre of the semicircle of monks, which closes up behind him.* THE DOMINICAN *has seen nothing of all this. The day continues to wane.*

SCENE VII.

THE DOMINICAN, THE BISHOP OF SEO D'URGEL, THE PRIOR, *monks.*

THE BISHOP.

Be witnesses that I, John, Bishop, am
About to judge, be he or good or bad,
This man now present, and shall question him
Before the judgment. Equity permits
The punishment, but wills that culprits have
Full notice of the charge.

[THE MONK *has turned round. He observes the proceedings with grave attention. He does not seem moved. He fixes his eyes on* THE BISHOP.

What art thou? Say.

THE MONK.

A friar preacher.

THE BISHOP.

And what is thy name?

THE MONK.

Torquemada.

THE BISHOP.

'T is said that yet a child
The demon did possess thee, and that since
Thou 'rt chased by hideous visions. Is this true?

THE MONK.

Realities alone have power o'er me.

THE BISHOP.

All fancies.

THE MONK.

Be content with visions. I
See God.

[*Fixing his gaze on the mystic gilt triangle on the top of the great cross of the cemetery.*

What will'st thou, Lord, that we should do,
Who are thy priests before the eternal light?
Behold thy simple and most awful law,
And naught but that. Oh, it is terrible!
But as for me, how can I help it?

THE BISHOP.

Answer.
'T is said that in your thought we doctors all
Delude ourselves who loathe the impious man
As if he were a panther.

THE MONK.

Yes, my lord,
My lords the bishops do delude themselves.

THE BISHOP.

Thou worm of earth!

THE MONK.

The impious should be loved, —
And saved.

THE BISHOP.

'T is said a dogma false wherein
The Lombard Didier had gone astray
Seduces thee, and in thy vain conceit
Thou holdest hell extinguished by the stake;
So that the flame wafts up to heaven the dead.
And for the soul's salvation we must needs
The body burn.

THE MONK.

'T is truth.

THE BISHOP.

An error, monk,
Bewitches thee. The dismal tree of evil
Has error for its root.

THE MONK.

The soul abhors
Its contact with its vile associate,
The body. Burning is the only way
To purify.

THE BISHOP.

A dreadful doctrine.

THE MONK.

No.

THE BISHOP.

And false.

THE MONK.

And true. And by its guidance, I
Intend to rule my acts.

THE BISHOP.

A viper, thou!

THE MONK.

My faith in it is firm. Ah, yes!

THE BISHOP.

Beware,
Unless thou dost retract! I here command
That thou repent of it, and from this time
Cease to believe in such a heresy.

THE MONK.

I cannot lie, and, in all humbleness,
I must persist.

THE BISHOP.

Thou art perverse!

THE MONK.

I have
With me the Council of the Lateran
And Innocent the Third.

THE BISHOP.

If thou art docile,
Thou hast all things within thy reach. But if
Thou turnest rebel, nothing. Come, my son,
Thy error is a treacherous light that can
Spread mischief round. From it a schism might spring.
Come, strike thy breast, and say: "I have been wrong."

THE MONK.

I have been right.

THE BISHOP.

Renounce thy doctrine, like
That Bruno of Angers who wished to grow
To greatness and recanted.

THE MONK.

Yes; but I
Wish not to grow to greatness, but to rest
In my own littleness.

THE BISHOP.

Puffed up with pride!

THE MONK.

Not so, my lord, I am inspired by faith.

THE BISHOP.

But what dost thou intend to do?

THE MONK.

To go
Barefoot to Rome and warn the Holy Father.

THE BISHOP.

'T was he who ordered me to judge thee, dog!

THE MONK.

The barking of the dog awakes the shepherd.
I shall awake the Pope, and he must listen.

THE BISHOP (*to those present, pointing to* THE MONK).

My sons, this man is ruthless.

THE MONK.

Yes, because
He is compassionate. Saint Paul has said:
"Faith burns through charity."

THE BISHOP.

Thou dost mistake
The meaning of the text thou wrongly quotest.
Sixtus the Fourth, a pastor whom the world
In reverence holds, wills that the Church should be
Less rigorous, and faith become more mild.
In him with sanctity indulgence dwells,
And he would armour truth with tenderness.
The Inquisition, too, has gentler grown,
And when the Pope uplifts his sacred hand,
It is to bless, not strike. We seldom see
The smoking fagots now.

THE MONK.

This laxity
Appalls my soul. The flames of hell expand
And higher rise, the lower grow the flames
That from the stake ascend.

THE BISHOP.

Poor darkened soul!
What is, then, thy desire?

THE MONK.

To save the world.

THE BISHOP.

But how?

THE MONK.

By fire.

THE BISHOP.

Beware of remedy
So merciless and savage.

THE MONK.

The physician
Is not the master of the remedy.

THE BISHOP.

But, say, what dost thou hope?

THE MONK.

To triumph if
God aid me.

THE BISHOP.

We shall see.
[*He shows* THE MONK *the opening of the vault.*
Go, enter there.

THE MONK.

But what is that?

THE BISHOP.

Thy tomb.

THE MONK.

Content.

[*He proceeds towards the vault.*

THE BISHOP.

Fall back,
There is yet time.

THE MONK (*marching toward the vault*).

Introibo.

THE BISHOP.

Reflect.

THE MONK (*with eyes raised to heaven*).

Smite thou, O God, thy prophet and thy priest,
And may thine awful will be done.

[*He goes to the vault, and stops at the brink.*

THE BISHOP.

Thou owest
Obedience to thy bishop. He offends
His brethren, who amid the cloister's shades
Lifts up too bold a head. The Church is bound
To plunge in night the man who mars her peace.

THE MONK (*standing on the threshold of the vault*).

Amen!

THE BISHOP.

Yield, monk, I summon thee to yield
Obedience.

THE MONK.

No.

THE BISHOP.

Descend a step.

[THE MONK *puts one foot within the vault, and goes down the first step.*

Recant;
In Jesus' name I ask thee.

THE MONK.

No.

THE BISHOP.

Descend.

[THE MONK *goes down a second step.*

Abjure thy error.

THE MONK.

No.

THE BISHOP.

Descend.

[THE MONK *goes down a third step.*

I am
Thy bishop and thy judge. Retract thy false
And barbarous doctrine.

THE MONK.

No; for it is true.

THE BISHOP.

Submit to me.

THE MONK.

I cannot.

THE BISHOP.

Then, descend.

[THE MONK *goes down. Only half of his body is seen.* THE BISHOP *advances towards the opening. He shows* THE MONK *the interior.*

A cruse of water and a barley loaf
Thou seest there. Soon shall the curtain close
That shuts out day from thee. Soon shall the stars
And sunlight be hid from thee.

THE MONK.

Be it so.

THE BISHOP.

Descend.

[*He does so, only his head now appearing above the sepulchre.*

Bethink thee yet. Here, like a torch,
Without one breath of air, in hunger, thirst,
Thy life must pass away, Oh, such a death
Is horrible!

THE MONK.

It is sublime.

THE BISHOP.

Descend.

[THE MONK *disappears in the vault.*

THE MONK (*in the tomb*).

My feet have reached the floor.

THE BISHOP.

Place over him
That flagstone.

THE MONK.

Do so.

[*At a sign from* THE BISHOP, *two Monks roll the flagstone over the entrance to the vault. They do not, however, close it entirely, but leave a small vent-hole, over which* THE BISHOP *leans.*

THE BISHOP.

In the name of Christ!
And by Saint Peter's ring! wilt thou retract?
The night awaits thee when all hope is past.

THE MONK.

No.

THE BISHOP.

Thou hast but a moment more. Renounce
Thy wild and reckless errors.

THE MONK.

No.

THE BISHOP.

Then, go
In peace!

[*The two Monks push the flagstone, and the sepulchre is shut.*

And now, my brethren, let us pray.

[*They all join their hands together. The monks form in procession two by two, and march away slowly and solemnly, with* THE BISHOP *walking last. They disappear under the trees, chanting the prayer for the dead. Their voices gradually grow weaker.*

VOICES OF MONKS (*in the distance*).

De profundis ad te clamavi, Domine.

THE VOICE (*in the tomb*).

Have mercy, Lord, on this most wretched world!

VOICES OF MONKS.

Libera nos.

THE VOICE (*in the tomb*).

O God, deliver me!

[*Enter* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE.

SCENE VIII.

THE MONK *in the vault;* DON SANCHO, DONNA ROSE. DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *step out from the copse. They stop at the edge of the wood, and gaze at each other and at the solitude around them. A few moments' silence. It is almost night.*

DON SANCHO.

Because our love began in childhood's hour,
Our souls commingle, and my hand seeks thine;
And whether I draw thee, or thou dost me,
I cannot tell. There is some mystery, Rose,
That hovers over us, and sometimes haunts
My dreams. We have been reared together here
Within these walls. Who are we, dost thou know?
Why are we prisoners? But why should I care,
Since I to love thee am left free? Thou art
My lady, and I am thine own true knight.
I know not why I should speak of my soul.
My soul! it is the fragrant breath to which
Thy lips give issue; 't is the heavenly fire
That beams from out thine eyes. I have no soul
When thou 'rt no longer by. A kiss. — Thy veil
Annoys me.

DONNA ROSE.

No.

[*She lets him kiss her, then leans on his arm and points to the sky.*

See yonder star.

[*Both gaze on the heavens with ecstasy.*

THE VOICE (*in the tomb*).

O God!

Save, save the world!

VOICES OF MONKS (*in the distance*).

Ite, pax sepulcris!

THE VOICE (*in the tomb*).

Save, save!

DONNA ROSE.

Dost hear monks chanting?

DON SANCHO.

No. I hear
A cry.

VOICES OF MONKS (*growing fainter*).

Onus grave super caput.

DONNA ROSE.

It was the chanting of the monks; thou seest
How tender is the night when songs of praise
Rise through its dusky shades, an offering meet
For heaven! Throughout the earth there 's naught but love.
Then let us love each other!

VOICES OF MONKS.

Miserere!

THE VOICE (*in the tomb*).

Miserere!

DON SANCHO.

No, no. It is a cry.
Some one is calling. I was right. Whence comes
That cry?

DONNA ROSE.

'T is from the chapel. 'T is the hymn
Of evening.

DON SANCHO.

No.

DONNA ROSE.

The mists of night are apt
To mock our senses.

DON SANCHO (*noticing the stone that closes the vault*).

It is there!

DONNA ROSE.

I 'm frightened.

DON SANCHO.

There is some one beneath!

DONNA ROSE.

The dead to speak!

THE VOICE (*in the tomb*).

O God! eternal Father!

DON SANCHO.

'Neath that stone
A living man is buried.

DONNA ROSE.

Go not near.
Some ghost, I say, with bloodless, hideous face,
Will surely rise!

DON SANCHO (*almost violently*).

Come help me.

[*He kneels down and tries to move the stone. She kneels beside him and also attempts to raise it. He turns to her, smiling.*

If he is
A malefactor, let him have through thee

His pardon. [*He stoops down over the stone and shouts.*
Is there some one suffering here?

THE VOICE (*in the tomb*).

Is anybody near? Help!

DON SANCHO.

Wait a moment.
[*Both attempt to move the flagstone.*
In vain we try to turn aside this stone.
Where find a lever?
[*He sees an iron cross, on a tomb near the wall, a few steps from him.*
Ah, that cross!
[*Rising and going to the cross.*

DONNA ROSE (*stopping him*).

Take care!

DON SANCHO (*looking at the tomb*).

Alas, poor man!

DONNA ROSE.

I dread to see you touch
That cross, a holy thing.

DON SANCHO.

It will be holier
When it has saved him. If I pull it down
Christ will approve my deed. [*He removes the cross.*

DONNA ROSE (*making the sign of the cross*).

O crux, ave!

DON SANCHO (*examining the cross, which he grasps with both hands*).

A solid iron bar. Now for a stone.

[*He rolls a block of stone near the tomb, and uses it as a fulcrum for his lever. He then introduces the point of the upper arm of the cross under the flagstone, and both endeavour to bend the bar.*

Ah! death likes not his eyelids to be opened.
'T is hard.

[*They stop a moment to recover breath.*

A convent is a curious place,
And sometimes is the scene of gloomy deeds.

DONNA ROSE.

O God! I shake with fear.

DON SANCHO (*leaning heavily on the lever*).

This flagstone is
Exceeding heavy.

DONNA ROSE.

It gives way! It swerves.

[*The stone begins to move.*

DON SANCHO.

One effort more. Give me a little help.

[ROSE *throws all her weight on the bar.* SANCHO *pushes the stone back. The vault is uncovered.*

DONNA ROSE (*clapping her hands*).

Well done!

DON SANCHO (*gazing into the dark vault*).

Ah, what a ghastly den! 'T is thick
With hideous fog.

[THE MONK *comes out slowly from the vault. He fixes his eyes by turns on* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE.

DONNA ROSE.

A living man! Why, yes!
It is the monk, the old man whom we saw!
What happiness is ours to have been there,
And to have heard him!

THE MONK.

You have saved me, children.
I swear the debt I owe I will repay.

ACT II.

THE THREE PRIESTS.

SCENE. — *In Italy. The top of a mountain. A hermit's grotto. At the back, the entrance, opening on the sky.*

On the ground in a corner, a straw mat. In the corner opposite, a little altar on which rests a death's head. In a hollow of the rock, a pitcher of water, a black loaf, a wooden dish on which are seen apples and chestnuts. A stone here and there for a seat, a larger one for a table. Forests on the horizon. Precipices, slopes parched by the sun and crossed by ravines. In the distance, a torrent. Through the mist, the belfry of a monastery.

SCENE I.

FRANCIS DE PAULA *alone. He is praying on his knees. He suddenly stops and rises. He listens. A confused noise of trumpets, horns, and barking is heard.*

FRANCIS.

What are those sounds I hear? It surely must
Be an illusion. 'T is the bell. [*He listens.*] No, 't is
A horn. A horn that sounds from rock to rock!
[*He listens.*] The torrent sometimes seems a host of voices
Rent by the wind and mingling with the breeze
That howls through forests. [*Listening.*] No; it is the chase. [*He looks outside.*
Oh! how the pack and whoop and trumpet blast
Do scare the mystic groves, and, to the ken
Of beast, man changes to a demon now.
[*He listens. The din of the hunt becomes more and more distinct.*
A fearful scandal this! Since Dorothy

And Simon first came here, the hermit shared
His cavern with the wolf alone, on this
Most hallowed waste, the Holy Father's fief,
Beneath the shelter of thick-spreading boughs;
They leagued together in fraternal love,
And man and nature were at peace. No one
The right doth hold, though he be prince or king,
To break the silence of these rugged woods
With hounds and horns and shouts, intruding on
A sacred mountain the tiara rules.

[*The barking is farther off. The clamour of the hunt is now close by, now at a distance, ceases a moment, and then begins again.*

The right to do so is the Pope's alone,—
A right he must not use, for he is but
A hunter after souls. No, even men
Stained with the vilest and most hideous crimes,
Would shrink from bloodshed in this holy place,
And from disturbing heaven's winged creatures, who
Are God's own care. And yet some one has dared
To do this wrong. Who can the caitiff be?

[*An aged monk, with staff in hand and feet covered with dust, appears at the entrance to the grotto. He wears a pilgrim's mantle over a Dominican habit. It is* TORQUEMADA. *He stops at the threshold. His beard is gray; that of* FRANCIS DE PAULA *white.*

SCENE II.

FRANCIS DE PAULA, TORQUEMADA.

TORQUEMADA.

Hail! venerable father!

FRANCIS.

Brother, hail!

TORQUEMADA.

May I rest here a moment?

FRANCIS.

Brother, enter.

TORQUEMADA.

I have toiled on, consumed by heat and cold,
And chilling fevers and the burning sun.
O holy patriarch! the man who seeks
The shelter of thy roof is all-unworthy!
Ah! I am very weary, and I say:
Lamma sabacthani! God bless thee, priest!

FRANCIS.

God bless thee, man.

TORQUEMADA.

I also am a priest.

FRANCIS.

'T is well. God be your guide. It is your right
To tell or not to tell from whence you come
And where you go; we all come from the dawn
And all go to the grave. And what you are,
My unknown brother, we are too. My son,
Infinitude weighs over all alike,

And mortals must all travel the same road.
We kneel before the altar, but our feet
Are at the tomb.

TORQUEMADA.

From out the Universe
I come, and to the City go. I go
To Rome.

FRANCIS.

To Rome?

TORQUEMADA.

Yes, I, so mean and vile,
Have yet a work to do, for which the time
Has come. I have, alone, and at a venture,
With naked feet, set out, and forced my way
Through snows and burning sands. My suit has reached
The Holy See. I know Pope Alexander
The Sixth.

FRANCIS.

What! our new Pope?

TORQUEMADA.

He is like me,
A Spaniard. At Valencia we have known
Each other well. His name is Borgia.
But who art thou, O reverend priest, whom God
Has guided to this lonely spot, content
To dwell in this rude cell? What is thy name?

FRANCIS.

Francis de Paula. You are?

TORQUEMADA.

Torquemada.

[*He draws back reverently before the hermit.*
Francis de Paula! Saint! Thou art a prophet!

FRANCIS.

No.

TORQUEMADA.

But thou dost work miracles, O father!
As it is said?

FRANCIS.

I see them, when the dawn
Doth every morning silver all the streams,
And when the giant sun comes forth to glad
The little birds, and when in field and grove
The all-embracing festival of Nature
Is set for hungry mouths, and all the dark
Bursts into life, and flowers unfold, and heaven
Through all its azure vastness shines; but 't is
Not I who work this miracle, 't is God.

TORQUEMADA.

O Father, Christ has brought us face to face!
Give ear unto the words of me, the seer,
Thou who art the apostle. Hast thou not
At times reflected on the thrice-crowned Pope,
That whited sepulchre, and hast thou not
Bethought thee that some obscure man might be
The loyal priest before the pontiff false,
And that while prostrate, as in duty bound,
Before the haughty vicar crowned by chance,
This pensive stranger bore within himself
That church's very soul whose diadem
The other vainly wears? What wouldst thou say
If such a chieftain of the faith, if such
An unknown victor, in thy presence stood?

FRANCIS.

The Pope, the man of God, bears sway. Two Romes
Do not exist.

TORQUEMADA.

No one is man of God
If he be not the man of men. Such man
Am I. Hell and its blackness lie in wait
For all the universe. I am the surgeon
With blood-bespattered hands. Unruffled, calm,
He saves, and yet seems horrible. So I,
The dread of all, through pity terrible,
But safe to realize my sacred aim,
Rush into that abyss whose name is Love.

FRANCIS.

I do not understand you. Let us pray.

[*He kneels before the altar.*

TORQUEMADA.

One day, erstwhile, when I was young, and wore
This robe but for a season, I beheld
A globe in Santa Cruz de Segovia
On which was traced the world with all its states,
Its rivers, forests, — all the earth, a heap
Of empires, countries, boundaries, and towns;
The snow-capped hills, and seas with islands strewn,
And all the depths in which the human race
Do fret and worry, swarming in the night.
Thou knowest, father, every emperor,
Be he or Christian or idolater,
A globe holds in his hand. This vision I
Have had before mine eyes: the universe,
With all its zones and nations, — Africa
And Europe; India, where the dawn is born;
And I have said, The point in question is
How to become the master of it all;
And I have said, The point in question is
To rule all this for Jesus, who in dreams

Hath often called on me for help. We must
Take hold of earth and give it back to heaven.
Yes, father, yes, this earthly sphere, with all
Its cries and wars, its kingdoms and its din,
Is mine, — dost hear? — is mine!

FRANCIS (*rising and laying a finger on the death's head*).
Behold my sphere!
This relic of the fate that wrecks and fails,
The contemplation of this dark enigma,
The shadow that eternity casts o'er
This thought-awakening nothingness, this skull
That, like a reef, shoots from the human gulf,
Those teeth that hold the smile with which they gleamed
At their first dawning, though the eyes have lost
Their whilom light, this hideous mask we all
Wear 'neath our brows, this spectre that discerns
That which is veiled from us, this fragment, taught
The mysteries of the unknown bourn — ah! yes,
To see below that frigid gaze my soul,
My naked soul, and, thinking, musing thus,
Grow old and feel that life is less and less,
With these two dark, fixed holes for witnesses,
To pray and meditate upon this dust,
This nullity, this silence in the shade
That listens to my prayers. Lo! all I have;
It is enough for me.

TORQUEMADA (*aside*).
A lightning flash
Darts through my soul while listening to his words.
Once Constantine — well worthy ruling he —
Saw hover in the air the labarum.
[*Pointing to the death's head.*
And I, like Constantine, behold that sign,

And I like him shall conquer by it. Yes,
This holy hermit shows my dazzled eyes
The other form of faith, the other light
By which the Christian 's guided. Yes, I shall
Hold fast my sphere, and from him shall take his,
So that the shoal may mark where is the port,
And death become life's banner!
[*To* FRANCIS DE PAULA.] Pray, give ear.
Saint Dominick has wrongly understood
The sense of fire, which is sublime, unless
It be most infamous. To punish was
His aim; mine is to save, to light anew
The stakes that have been quenched. My meaning is
Apparent to thee now?

FRANCIS.

It is.

TORQUEMADA.

I wish
To light on earth the countless, saving flames.
O father, none before me has e'er dreamed
Of better gift to man; and in my sleep
My Jesus comes and says: "Go on! Go on!
If thou dost reach the goal thou aimest at,
That shall be warrant for thy deeds!" I go!
[FRANCIS DE PAULA *places on the big stone that serves as a table the loaf, the plate of chestnuts, and the pitcher of water.*

FRANCIS.

There thou hast water, bread, and chestnuts. Drink
To quench thy thirst, and eat to still thy hunger.
As to thy plans, whose end I dimly see,
I pray that for thy sake God's thunderbolts
May strike thee dead, before a single stake
Shall flame to heaven; 't would be better far

For thee, my son, and for the human race
That thou shouldst die, ere thou hadst power to take
One step in such a path!

TORQUEMADA (*aside*).

How feeble grows
The mind that lives alone! For this poor saint
My purpose has no meaning.

FRANCIS.

Man was placed
On earth to love all things, the brother, friend
Of every creature. If he kill a worm,
He must know why. God of the human soul
Has made a sheltering wing that spreads itself
O'er all creation. Man cannot decree
The doom of anything that lives on earth,
In air, or sea, or under verdant boughs.
To men the liberty to toil; to birds
The freedom of the grove; to all be peace,
But neither chain nor cage. If man becomes
An executioner, God is a tyrant.
The Gospel has the cross, the sword, the Koran.
Let us transform all sorrow and all wrong
Into a blessing on this dismal earth.
Who smites may err; then let us never smite.
Ah! son, the scaffold is a dreadful challenge.
Leave death to God. What! Make the tomb your agent!
What arrogance! The child, the dove, the woman,
The flower, the fruit, all 's sacred, all is blessed;
And when by night or day I meditate,
And from this lofty pinnacle pour out
An all-embracing prayer into the depths,
Within me stirs the boundless power of love.
As for the Pope, my son, he is the Pope,

And we must reverence him. The great law is
To always pardon and to always hope,
Never to doom to death a living creature,
And if we see another's fault, to make
Atonement for that fault ourselves, to pray,
Believe, adore, — such is the law, my son,
And it is mine. Who keeps that law is saved.

TORQUEMADA.

Thou savest but thyself, old man! But how
About the others? Ah! the eternal loss
Of souls, my father! Every moment sees
The fatal plunge into the flames of hell,
Into the horrors of the yawning gulf!
All night and day the black abyss lies open.
Ah! yes, thou sav'st thyself! What dost thou, though,
To save thy brother man? In calm content
Thou livest on thy apples and thy nuts,
Another Anselm or Pacomus in
The Lybian desert, and thou art no more
The world's debtor, and all things go well,
And nothing horrible lurks round! For hell,
And darkness, and the doom of souls accursed, —
What carest thou? Thou hast thy bed of straw
And cruse of water, and canst meditate,
Alone! — alone! A child might live such life,
But not a man. There dwells, then, not in thee
The awful, holy fatherhood of God!
The human family which he created,
Is it of no account? Why, we regard
The welfare of an ox, we cure a dog!
And man 's in peril! Thou art pitiless!
Thou livest here beneath the vault of heaven,
Far from the haunts of man, and dost not feel
That by a thousand ties thou still art bound
To man, — to noxious, dreadful, impious man!

Who in the cavern's depths or on the heights
Still drags with him through every place his woes
From which distil his crimes! These spreading ills
Come not near thee! What, then! the living pass
Before thine eyes, and yet thou feelest not
Thy shadow links thee to those phantoms dark!
Ah, yes! indeed, thy hands are meekly crossed!
And thou dost chant the Psalms, and go and come
From cross to altar, from yon pile of stone
To this small piece of wood! 'T is isolation!
When everything is tottering, crumbling, sinking,
Old man, thy duty is amid the throng!
Yes, duty, rigorous, implacable,
Whose biting sting is felt within the conscience,
Doth tear thee from the cloister's solitude,
And cry: "Help, help! think of the human race!
Think of the multitude! Awake from sleep!
On, on!" — O God! must little children burn
In endless pangs! Must women, aged men,
Nay, all mankind sink in this howling Sodom!
Haste! save these souls accursed, against their will,
And force them to return to Paradise!
Old man, it is for this we are on earth.
Thy law is light; my law is mystery.
Thou art but hope, and I salvation am.
I am God's helper.

[*For some time a man has been standing on the threshold of the entrance. He is also old and gray-bearded. He has a hunting-spear in his hand and a three-branched cross on his breast He is dressed in a hunting suit of gold brocade, and wears a cap of gold with three circles of pearls. He has a horn at his belt. He has heard the last words of* FRANCIS DE PAULA, *and listened to those of* TORQUEMADA. *He bursts out laughing.* FRANCIS DE PAULA *and* TORQUEMADA *turn round.*

SCENE III.

The same. THE HUNTER.

THE HUNTER.

Well! upon my faith,
My lute-players could not amuse me more
Than you have done, my children. I have been
A well-pleased listener. You 're a pair of fools.
I left my dogs and nets and springes yonder,
And said: I will climb up and have a look
At this old fellow. So you see me here.
You have diverted me. But, on the whole,
Life would be very tiresome if it were
What you have called it.

[*He advances, folds his arms, and looks them in the face.*

God — if he exist,
He 's silent — made a silly masterpiece
When he made man. But in the gradual growth
From worm to snake, from snake to dragon, and
From dragon to the devil, there is grandeur.

[*He takes a step toward* TORQUEMADA

I know thee, Torquemada. Get thee gone.
Return into thy country. I received
Thy suit. 'T is granted. Go, my son. Thine is
A grand idea. It has made me laugh.
Go back to Spain, and do all that thou wilt.
The goods the Jews possess I grant my nephew.
My son, you asked why man is on the earth,
And I shall give the reason in two words.
What need to hide the truth? Life is enjoyment.
My friends, I can see naught beyond this world,
And in this world I see myself. For each

A word shines through the different prisms. For thee,
The meaning of that word is prayer, for me
'T is pleasure.

TORQUEMADA (*gazing alternately at* FRANCIS DE PAULA *and* THE HUNTER).

Both are egotists alike.

THE HUNTER.

Chance and the fitting moment worked the clay,
And the amalgam 's man. Now, as, like you,
I am but matter merely, should I not
A senseless dullard be to hesitate
And play the sluggard when joy speeds so fast,
Nor have delight of all, when all is fleeting ?
The chief concern of man is to be happy.
Whatever men call crime or vice I take
Into my service. Murder ? an expedient.
Incest ? a prejudice. I honour conscience
By bidding her a courteous good-bye.
Do you believe that, if my daughter 's fair,
I would be shy in seeking for her love ?
Bah ! I am not an idiot. I must live.
Go ask the falcon, eagle, and the hawk
If they know from what nest their prey has come.
Because you wear a habit black or white,
You think you 're forced to be absurd and timid,
And lower your eyes before the boundless bliss
The giddy universe spreads out before you.
Let us be wise and profit by the time.
Beyond death there is naught, let us live well !
The ball-room crumbles and becomes a tomb.
The sage's soul trips dancing to the grave.
Serve up my banquet. If to-day there 's need
To season some one else's feast with poison,

Let it be done. Why should the death of others
Disturb me? I have life. I am a vast
Insatiate, rabid hunger, and the world
Is in my eyes the fruit to be devoured.
O death, I will forget that thou art real.
I do not know thee, God. While I'm alive,
I make haste to be happy; when I'm dead,
I simply disappear.

FRANCIS (*to* TORQUEMADA).

I pray you say
Who is this bandit?

TORQUEMADA.

Father, 't is the Pope.

TORQUEMADA.

PART II.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TORQUEMADA.
DON SANCHO.
DONNA ROSE.
THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL.
KING FERDINAND.
QUEEN ISABELLA.
GUCHO.
THE BISHOP OF URGEL.
THE KING'S CHAPLAIN.
MOSES BEN HABIB, *Grand Rabbi.*
THE DUKE D'ALAVA.
AN USHER.

Soldiers, Pages, Monks, Jews. Black and white penitents.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *The royal patio, called "Condes-reyes," in the convent-palace of Llana at Burgos. A square court surrounded by a gallery with trilobate arcades. One of the sides of this gallery in front of the theatre. The court has two great public gates, facing each other and opening on the city beyond. The gallery in the foreground abuts, on the left, on a folding-door, closed and raised above a flight of three steps. On the right, it communicates with an outer porch which is a kind of lodge. Near this outer porch, on a dais, is a high iron chair, blazoned and crowned with a pinnacle, above which is placed a sword, the point unsupported. In the outer porch are seen two priests, motionless, who seem charged with the care of a chest placed on the floor.*

SCENE I.

DON SANCHO, THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL, *then* GUCHO. DON SANCHO *is dressed in cloth of gold. He has a sword at his side.*

DON SANCHO.

But surely 't is a dream !

THE MARQUIS.

No, it is real.

DON SANCHO.

I am a prince !

THE MARQUIS.

Count King of Burgos.

DON SANCHO.

I !

THE MARQUIS.

Except our sovereign lord, Don Ferdinand,
You hold the highest rank throughout this province.
[*He kisses the hand of* DON SANCHO.
The world is yours, for you have happiness
And greatness.

DON SANCHO.

Yes! for Rose will be my bride!

THE MARQUIS.

Within an hour. They 're putting on her crown.
The chapel's almost fitted up, and prayers
Have been begun. The Bishop of Urgel
Will celebrate the marriage. I arrange
The ceremony. So the King has ordered.

DON SANCHO.

You, our good genius!

THE MARQUIS.

Donna Rose awaits
Your presence in this cloister, while the altar
Is being lighted. I, Gil de Fuentel,
Will open for you yonder door, so that
Your Highness may, as custom bids, seek out
Your future bride, and lead her here to pay
The homage which is due your suzerain,
And thank him for his grace. Before your marriage
The King would speak to you. Such is his wish.
He will be in that gallery.

DON SANCHO.

I would
Prefer to go to church.

THE MARQUIS.

You must obey.
The King, my lord, will simply say these words:
"I give consent." Besides, it is a custom
Come down from elder time, because your crown
Of his is vassal.

DON SANCHO.

Be it so.

THE MARQUIS.

You must
Conform to legal usage.

DON SANCHO.

So, my father —

THE MARQUIS.

Was Jorge, the Infante of Burgos.

DON SANCHO.

His father was —

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Myself!

DON SANCHO.

The King, from whom
The Infante sprung.

THE MARQUIS.

A long and prosperous reign
Awaits your Highness. Let my counsels shape
Your course.

DON SANCHO.

I yield blindfolded to your guidance.
I know not why it is: I think you love me.
And still, it is not long since first we met.
One day you brought an order — how we feared you! —
To Rose and me to leave that convent old,

And come in presence of our lord. When we
Reached here, I was afraid. It almost looked
As if we were some captured prey. But now
We are allowed to marry, and with joy
My heart is filled. And, when by you, I feel
My happiness secure.

THE MARQUIS.

Depend on me.
That happiness is my sole care, and I
To God entrust your sacred head. If you
Lay dying on a bed of torturing pain,
And if, as happened to the Count de Retz,
You needed for your safety draughts of blood,
What bliss were mine to open all my veins,
That while I died you might be born again
Of mine own life, — my prince, my king, my lord!
[*Aside.*] My child!
[*Enter* GUCHO. *He hears the last words of* THE MARQUIS.

GUCHO (*aside, observing* THE MARQUIS).

How kind he looks! — triumphant too!
Some mystery here! But bah! why should I care?
I 'm placed too far beyond the sphere of man
E'en to be curious about such things.
And though by motion of this little finger
I might prevent all ill, achieve all good,
I would not wag it. No, my business is
To be a creeping thing, a looker-on, —
And to be valueless.
[*Enter a company of soldiers of the African guard of the King of Castile, having at their head* THE DUKE OF ALAVA, *their captain.*

THE MARQUIS (*to* DON SANCHO).

The King, my lord,
Will in a moment 'neath that peristyle

Receive your Highness.

[*He mounts the steps of the perron, and throws back the leaves of the folding-door opening on the interior of the convent-palace. He makes a sign to* DON SANCHO *to follow him.*

Enter, prince.

[*He sees the soldiers, and points them out to* DON SANCHO.

This guard
Is there to do you honour.

[*He continues his discourse with* DON SANCHO *while the latter is mounting the steps.*

When you hear
The trumpets sound, your Highness shall conduct
The Countess to the King, and both shall kneel.

[*He casts a look beyond the gallery.*

Ah, 't is the King.

[DON SANCHO *enters through the folding-door, and after him* THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL. *The door closes on them. Enter* THE KING, *followed by his chaplain.*

SCENE II.

THE KING, GUCHO, THE DUKE OF ALAVA, *a chaplain of the King.*

THE KING (*to* THE DUKE).

Here, Duke.

[THE DUKE *approaches* THE KING.]

When from my neck
I take this collar off, and on his neck
I place it —

THE DUKE.

Sire, I hear.

THE KING (*looking on the company of guards*).

They 're there. 'T is well.

[*To* THE DUKE.] When you shall hear me say: "I dub thee knight,
Now thou art King. God have thee in his keeping!"
Then, Duke, behind him you shall draw your sword,
And you shall kill him.

THE DUKE.

Sire, it is enough.

GUCHO (*aside, pressing his two bawbles to his heart*).

My dolls are in more safety than are men.

[THE CHAPLAIN *leans towards the ear of* THE KING, *and points to the chest guarded by the two Priests standing under the outer porch.*

CHAPLAIN (*in a low voice to* THE KING).

The robes of serge are here, and all prepared,
According to your Majesty's command.

THE KING.

I do not think they will be needed; still
[*Pointing to the outer porch.*
Remain beneath the vault.

[THE CHAPLAIN *joins the two Priests under the outer porch.* THE KING *turns to the Captain of the guards.*

You, Duke, stay there.

[*Aside.*] In either case I will have nigh at hand
The means of compassing the issue which
I deem most suitable.

[*The folding-door opens, giving entrance to* THE MARQUIS DE FUENTEL, *and then closes again.* THE KING *has remarked the iron chair, and has begun to gaze earnestly at it.*

SCENE III.

The same, THE MARQUIS.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Within an hour
He shall be married, — my young prince and count.
Each moment that glides past is but a round
By which he mounts from out the depths of night
Towards the radiant dawn. Another step
And he is happy, powerful, august!
Oh, what a gleam of light this sinless child
Has shed upon a grandsire's infamy!
And I can weep to think this shrunken soul,
So vile and dark, has still within itself
A something that expands, O merciful God,
Beneath thy gracious power! [*He dries his eyes.*

THE KING (*turning round*).

Ah, you are here!

THE MARQUIS (*bowing*).

My liege —

THE KING.

I shall be highly pleased to hold
Some converse with you, Marquis.
[*He points to the old iron chair.*
What 's this chair?
And why the sword above it?

THE MARQUIS.

Please your grace,
That is the throne on which Don Garcia sat,
Your ancestor. The sword is placed above,
To symbolize a kingly attribute.

THE KING.

'T is right. In this my realm I am the source
Of life and death.

GUCHO (*to* THE KING).

But there are two of you!

[*For some moments a procession has been debouching through the door on the right into the square court, and moving towards the door on the left. It consists of two files of penitents, — one black, the other white. They march parallel to each other, with slow steps, their cowls hiding their faces. The cowls of the black penitents are white, those of the white penitents black. The cowls have holes for the eyes. At the head of the two files, a black penitent with black cowl bears a black banner, on which is seen a death's head above two bones in the form of a cross. The death's head is white as well as the two cross bones. The procession moves across the back of the theatre with slow steps and in silence.* GUCHO *points out the banner to* THE KING.

THE KING (*to* GUCHO).

You speak the truth! That abject monk!

GUCHO.

Agreed.
He 's abject, but he 's great. When Torquemada
Presents himself, all tremble, even you.

THE MARQUIS.

That banner seems to bring with it the smell
Of smoking flesh, the odour of the stake.

THE KING.

Where go they, Marquis?

GUCHO.

In pursuit of those
Who shall be burned on the public square.
You are, mayhap, a simple citizen.
Straightway, without an inkling of the reason,
You find yourself enmeshed in some dark plot;
Or you have said one day a silly word
By your fireside, without a thought of harm;
Scarce has that fatal word escaped your lips,
When it takes flight towards the Holy Office,
And sinks into that dismal ear which lies
Uncovered in the night. Then issues forth
From out a cloister crowned by gloomy domes
Yon banner heading its two rows of phantoms,
And the procession slowly marches on.
No obstacle arrests its course. It moves
Across or through the things and men it meets,
And when it shows itself all take to flight,
Or fall upon the earth, for they behold
The dread familiars of the Inquisition:
They know that vision is a hand that goes
To clutch some victim sitting by his hearth.
So, in this guise, it moves through all the city,
[*Pointing to the banner and the two files of cowled men passing at the back of the court of honour.*
Just as you see it now — by day or night.
It goes straight to its aim, mute, terrible,
Without or cry or chant. You 're in your house,
Perhaps you have sat down at table, or,
With laugh and innocent chatter, pluck the flowers
Your garden bears, or kiss your children, when
That death's head comes upon you in the shade.
What numbers have been burned, — a countless host!
Whoever sees that standard march towards him
Is hopeless and undone.

[*The procession and banner disappear through the great door of the court opposite that by which they have entered.*

THE MARQUIS (*in a low voice to* THE KING).

The clergy are
Too highly favoured by their prince. What then!
This Torquemada dares to hold at Rome
A secret council, parleys with the Pope,
Brings back a bull, and lo! this is enough
To throw the King into the shade! And so
His power resplendent, gladdening every eye,
Sinks into blackness! Sire, this monk usurps.
He has in some few years his sordid head
Placed on a level with the crowns of kings.

[THE KING *seems distracted, and not to pay any attention to the words of* THE MARQUIS, *who says in a low voice to* GUCHO:

He does not listen.

GUCHO (*in a low tone to* THE MARQUIS).

'T is because his mind
Is taken up with something else.

[THE KING *raises his head. At a sign from him all the persons present fall back. He beckons to* THE MARQUIS *to approach. He leads him to the front of the stage, so that no one can hear what he is about to say.* GUCHO *is watching them.*

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS).

I have
On all occasions followed your advice,
And it has been my gain, for there are none
Whose council, Marquis, I prefer to yours.

I wish, then, to consult you on a matter
That must be settled quickly, even here.
[THE KING *perceives* GUCHO, *who has remained behind the dais of the iron throne. At a gesture from* THE KING, GUCHO *goes off.*

GUCHO (*aside, looking at* THE KING *and* THE MARQUIS).
Young tiger and old cat! What 's happening now?

SCENE IV.

THE KING, THE MARQUIS *in front of the stage. The other bystanders at the back, beyond reach of their voices.*

THE KING.

I know how prudent all your counsel is,
And it shall be my guide.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

And I know too
What all this signifies. Your Highness will
Precisely do the very opposite
Of what I may advise.

THE KING.

Are you content
With matters as they stand in Europe now?
Do you, so subtle an intriguer, see
Aught that is likely to hold stable there?

THE MARQUIS.

A dike. That dike is you. Alone you stand
Erect. All else goes down before the power

Of ever-growing France. Yet, sire, you are
On one point vulnerable, on Navarre;
For there your frontier 's open. But you have,
Of your own wondrous wisdom, seen the ill
And found the cure long ere we thought of it,
And taken Sancho from the cardinal,
That poor old kinglet of Orthez, and now
The scale leans to your Highness' side at last.
You have the power, Don Sancho has the right.
The colossus you are, the lever he.
You hold him, like an eagle that has seized
An eaglet in his talons. He alone
Of all on earth is needful to your power.
While he 's alive, France will be held in check.

THE KING.

He needful to me! — he, and he alone!

THE MARQUIS.

With Donna Rose.

THE KING.

So then you think I ought
To let Don Sancho live?

THE MARQUIS.

Most surely, yes.

THE KING.

Well, in a moment, when yon door is opened,
You 'll see Don Sancho slain.
[*Movement of astonishment and terror by* THE MARQUIS.
Rose pleases me.
Never did mirth and modesty combine
In loftier soul, and never maid did wed

Such charming voice to such a flashing eye;
She has so cruel and so sweet an air;
Her little feet this hand of mine could hold;
She trembles at a word, and thereby gives
A heightened loveliness to all her charms.
Now since she has enraptured me, the King,
Don Sancho's one too many.

THE MARQUIS.

Sire, you're right.

THE KING.

Ah! well I know state reasons bid the King
Withstand his lusts. What course then should I take?
This has not been a sudden whim of mine.
One wavers while a fire is waxing strong.
Think you I have not struggled? I have said
To my own self, for in myself this strife
Had to be waged with tiresome stubbornness:
"The devil! she is pretty! — yes, but still
To me this marriage would be a great gain.
I need Navarre. Without Navarre I have
No frontier." — Love, keep quiet, I beseech! —
But then her eyes! her velvet skin! her grace!
"Hold, King! Wilt for a passing petticoat
Lose in one day the fruit of ten years' battles?
Direct thy gaze beyond the mountains there,
And see thyself the King of France's mock.
Suppose we marry Rose and Sancho, then,
The Durance and the Adour both are ours,
Our frontiers are arranged; so let us act
As every skilled, exalted statesman should.
Let them be wedded!" — No! what yoke is mine!
To see her pass into another's arms! —
No, never that! Perish my rival rather!
She is my prey. Am I a slave, and are

My sceptres tyrants? Must I mutilate
This heart of mine, and tear out every fibre,
Because a rabble rout of royal spies,
Who dwell upon the Seine, the Tiber, Rhine,
Are watching for the hour distraught ambition
Is off its guard? It is a grievous thing
To be a mighty king. The heart requires
Some compensation. I lament the fate
That forces me to have Don Sancho killed,
And killed here in his home, among his people;
But we 're not on this earth to bore ourselves.
Am I in fault because this girl is fair?

THE MARQUIS.

'T is really not your fault.

THE KING.

I 'm tired to death
Of Isabel. I need another woman.
In short, I surely have the right to love.

THE MARQUIS.

The lion has the right to hunt for prey
When he is hungry.

THE KING.

List! I love and hate.
I seem to see their childhood spent together,
That cloister's privacy, the grass and furze,
His daring and her grace, the shaded groves,
The kisses which this saucy fellow took!
This Sancho! — Ah! I 'm jealous, and would fain
Be rid of him! I like to count the throbs
Of sombre hatred in my wrathful heart,
And in my very hair would wish to feel
The fiery pulsings. It is good to hate,

To hold your enemy until you crush
And trample on him; ah! what savage joy!
I am the abyss rejoicing to engulf
This halcyon. I feel a tremulous force
Within me for destruction. Woe to him
Would try to change my course! No check avails.
I hold Don Sancho, and will have revenge!
Revenge for what? Revenge because he's loved,
Because he's fair. I, who am dark and close,
Have in my soul a hundred storms that rush
From adverse quarters. Murder is my friend,
And Cains my brethren are, and while I look
With grave and glacial and half-sleeping eyes,
I feel the fell desires that fill my soul,
As the volcano, cold beneath its snows,
Feels that its lava mounts towards its mouth
In waves of blackness. He that would attempt
To calm my soul would make me rage the more.
Attempt to still me, and you drive me mad.
Yes, Marquis, I would shatter God himself!—
Two means exist by which I can get rid
Of the Infante.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Two!

THE KING.

One sad, the cloister;
The other quick and sharp, the grave. Oh, yes,
The cloister's well. The tomb is better still.
It hears no sound within its safe abyss.
The cloister may be dumb. The tomb is deaf,
And has this precious feature: none can leave it.
The cloister is an abject circle traced
By a grim compass. In it those who live
Turn round forever. In this fashion Sancho

Would see his fair locks change to white, and, pale,
Would grow to age, the gloomy temple's captive.
I have the choice. — I much prefer his death —
What do you think?

THE MARQUIS.

You 're right.

THE KING.

Eh!

THE MARQUIS.

Let him die.

THE KING (*aside*).

Why, who has whispered to me that he was
The father of Don Sancho? 'T is not true!

THE MARQUIS.

I think as you do.

THE KING (*aside*).

Oh, the lies that reach
The ears of kings!

THE MARQUIS (*watching him*).

Your purpose proves your wisdom.

THE KING.

Then you advise his death.

THE MARQUIS.

Yes, sire, I do.

THE KING (*aside*).

This is suspicious. He affirmed just now
That I had need of Sancho, and his life
Was bound up with the welfare of my state.
With Sancho dead, I have no longer claim

Upon Navarre. The Empire blocks the way
In one direction, and France in the other.
[*Watching* THE MARQUIS *closely.*
Where does this traitor wish to urge me on?
He has some scheme in hand. [*Aloud.*] It would be nice
To eat up Sancho all at once, but then
What if I nibbled at him? While he is
Within the cloister, he is near my teeth.
Suppose I kept him there to see him pine
And peak and grow more stupid every day?
A slow revenge gives a voluptuous joy.
What thinkest thou?

THE MARQUIS.

Why choose a tortuous path?
No, sire, go straight towards the goal. Strike, kill!

THE KING (*aside*).

The knave! Till now his every word was all
In favour of Don Sancho — He forgets,
[*Watching* THE MARQUIS, *who is watching him.*
But I remember Ah, the two-faced rogue!
But on his face I see a sudden gleam!
Why does he press me where my hatred leads?
How devilish quick he changed his views for mine!
[*Aloud to* THE MARQUIS.] But blood —

THE MARQUIS.

The bloody kings have always had
The most devoted servants. Kill!

THE KING (*aside*).

He is
A secret hireling of the King of France.
The scoundrel!

[*Aloud.*] But you lately used these words:
"Don Sancho is your hope. You need his aid.
Peace is assured along the Pyrenees
While he is living."

THE MARQUIS.

Sire, I was deceived.
You 're great, and have no need of any man;
No, not of God even. Kill!

THE KING.

You are sincere.
I feel it; but reflect. That set of beggars,
The people, take offence at those expedients
Which policy dictates. The mob is stirred
To pity from slight cause. It takes to heart
A gash or two in some one's breast, and if
He is a handsome lad, it cries aloud.
Put me in prison, I am soon forgot,
But men weep round my bier. We should mistrust
The use of too harsh methods, my good friend.
Don Sancho's young, and tragedies suit not
The public taste; while many worthy folk
Would thank me for my clemency, if I
Should wall him in a convent. Clemency!
So beautiful a virtue! Let his home
Be in a cloister. Can he fly? Oh, no!

THE MARQUIS.

The grave would guard him closer.

THE KING.

But a murder—

THE MARQUIS (*pointing to the palace*).

'T is no unwonted guest within these walls.

THE KING (*aside*).

Ha, traitor!
[*Aloud.*] Then, what is your final word,
Good Marquis?

THE MARQUIS.

Kill! [*Flourish of trumpets.*
The trumpets! Here they come!

[*The folding-doors of the convent-palace open.* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *appear on the perron holding each other's hand.* DONNA ROSE *in a robe of silver lace with a crown of pearls on her head.* DON SANCHO *with the cap of a count adorned with an aigrette composed of plumes and precious stones. On the right of the couple is* THE BISHOP OF URGEL, *a mitre on his head. Behind them, ladies, lords, priests in embroidered copes.*

SCENE V.

The same. DON SANCHO, DONNA ROSE, THE BISHOP OF URGEL.

THE BISHOP.

King Ferdinand, this man, Don Sancho, weds
This maiden, Donna Rose, and both are sprung
From Gothic kings, — she, Lady of Orthez;
He, Count of Burgos. Sire, if 't is your will
That I should marry them, I shall proceed.
Don Sancho with his bride, led by the priest,
Will kneel before you, sire, and pledge his faith,
For he is count and you are his liege lord.

[DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *descend, advance towards*

THE KING *and kneel.* THE DUKE OF ALAVA *takes a step forward.* THE MARQUIS *watches him breathless.*

DON SANCHO.

My lordships, sire, I lay down at your feet.

THE KING (*looking earnestly at* THE BISHOP).

What is this madness, bishop? dost thou wed
A monk and nun?

THE BISHOP.

My liege! —

THE KING.

Art thou aware
That they have taken vows? And dost thou dare
To consummate this horrid sacrilege?

THE BISHOP.

Your Grace! —

THE KING.

A frock for him! a veil for her!

[*The chaplain and the priests issue from the outer porch. One of the priests holds a black veil in his hands, the other a robe of serge. The latter throws the frock over* DON SANCHO; *the former the veil over* DONNA ROSE. *The face of* DON SANCHO *disappears under the cowl, that of* DONNA ROSE *under the veil. The soldiers surround them. One of them snatches his sword from* DON SANCHO. THE KING *makes a furious gesture.*

Away with both! Each to a convent!

DON SANCHO (*struggling under the cowl*).

King!

THE KING (*to the priests*).

You 'll answer to me for that man.

THE MARQUIS (*breathing again*).

Alive!

[*The priests and soldiers lead off* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *in different directions.*

THE KING (*to* THE MARQUIS *in a low voice*).

I'll have her back. For sometimes, after all,
A woman leaves a cloister.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

And a man!

ACT II.

Scene.—*A hall of the old Moorish palace in Seville. This palace looks on the Tablada on which the Quemadero was placed. It is the Hall of the Council (del Consejo). At the back a gallery with Moorish columns opening on the exterior and closed by a vast curtain. On the left a long table, at the two extremities of which are placed two high arm-chairs surmounted by royal crowns. They are of the same height, and face each other. On the same side, in the tapestry, a secret door, low and narrow, communicating with a private staircase. On the opposite side, on the right, in a corner of the wall meeting the gallery at the back, large folding-doors above a flight of three steps. The table is covered with tapestry, embroidered with the arms of Castile and Aragon. In the middle of the table, on a large silver dish, are placed in rows thirty piles of gold crowns, high and thick, forming a square in the centre of the dish. On the table a silver-gilt inkstand, parchment, vellum, wax, seals. Gilt and coloured pens in the orifices of the inkstand. Near the table a sideboard with drawers.*

SCENE I.

The Marquis de Fuentel, Moses-Ben-Habib, *Grand Rabbi. Both enter through the secret door.*

THE MARQUIS.

There 's need of gold. Be lavish of your gold.

[The Grand Rabbi *points to the dish loaded with crowns in the middle of the table.* The Marquis *examines the heap of gold.*

Good.

THE RABBI.

Thirty piles of gold, and every pile
Contains a thousand crowns.

THE MARQUIS.

A first-rate plan.

THE RABBI.

The Queen is greedy.

THE MARQUIS.

And the King is thriftless.
Truth lodges at the bottom of a well;
Intrigue in golden mines. By dint of presents
The leave to live may be won from the great.
To 'scape a master or a cozening judge,
Or prince or priest, a poor man must be rich.
All kings are beggars, and require that alms
Be given without stint.
[*To* THE RABBI.] Away! Descend
The little staircase, Jew. The King is near.

THE RABBI.

Your goodness I implore, my lord. There still
Is time to save the Jewish people?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes.
The peril 's urgent. [*Dismissing him.*] Go!

THE RABBI.

I count on you.

THE MARQUIS.

Nay, count upon thy gold.

THE RABBI.

Shall we be let,
A hopeless, weeping crowd, prostrate ourselves
Before the King and Queen?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes; be it so.
But, for the moment, go.

THE RABBI.

Oh, day of wrath!
A hundred aged Jews, unless the King
Be our protector, must be burned alive
Here, even in this city of Seville;
And all the rest, alas! must exiles be.

THE MARQUIS (*sad and thoughtful*).

Yes; all 's prepared for that auto-da-fe
That has been long proclaimed.

THE RABBI.

Pray, is it true
The King this evening leaves?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes, for one day;
To-morrow he returns. Our oldest law
The charter of King Tulgas, sets apart
The morrow of an execution as
A day the King and Queen must spend in prayer
Within the convent of Triana.

THE RABBI.

Ah!
No need to offer prayers to save the dead,
If they who pray were not their slayers. Try
To save us, lord.

THE MARQUIS.

Speak low, and get thee gone.

[THE GRAND RABBI *bows to the ground, and leaves through the door in the tapestry, which closes on him.*

THE MARQUIS (*gazing on the door by which he has left, aside*).

'T is not thy Jewish hide or people's woe
That stimulates my anguish and my zeal,
And drives me to risk all. Alas! whene'er
I hear the hideous funeral knell that 's tolled
For the auto-da-fe, I shrink with dread.
Don Sancho 's in a convent, and declines
To be a monk, is stubborn and unyielding.
He may be flung at any moment on
The flaming stake. I tremble for him. Ah,
Thou frightful cloister, he must leave thee! How?

[*The great door at the back opens. Enter* THE KING. GUCHO *follows him. The two leaves fall back.* THE KING *in the full costume of Alcantara, with the sinople cross embroidered in emeralds on the mantle. He has a cap of green velvet, without plume, encircled with a royal crown.* GUCHO *squats behind one of the arm-chairs.*

SCENE II.

THE MARQUIS, THE KING, GUCHO. THE KING *seems to see nothing. He appears to be deeply preoccupied.*

THE KING (*aside*).

No need to hurry matters. Better wait.

THE MARQUIS (*to* THE KING, *making a reverence*).

A great disaster will occur to-day,
Unless the King prevent.

[THE KING *raises his head.* THE MARQUIS *points towards the outside of the palace hidden by the great curtain of the gallery at the back.*

On yonder square
A great auto-da-fe takes place in which
A multitude are to be burned alive.
There is an edict also which expels
The Jews, a loyal people whom a monk
Deprives your Highness of.

THE KING.

A horde we chase,
A crackling stake. Is this thy great disaster?
[*He perceives the dish laden with money on the table.*
Whence comes this gold?
[*To* THE MARQUIS.] From whom?

THE MARQUIS.

The Jews.

THE KING.

How much?

THE MARQUIS.

The sum amounts to thirty thousand crowns;
It is an offering made in the name
Of thirty cities.

THE KING.

Well, what do they ask?

THE MARQUIS.

That they be left in quiet.

THE KING.

It is much.
I cannot leave in quiet those who still
Continue to be Jews.

THE MARQUIS.

My gracious lord,
Deign to accept this gold a people lays
In fealty at your feet and at your queen's.

They humbly ask their sovereign to forbid
The burning of a hundred of their race.

THE KING.

'T is much.

THE MARQUIS.

A hundred?

THE KING.

No. 'T is much to ask
That I forbid an auto-da-fe. There is
My wife who preaches at me; and there is
The Pope. Both are relentless, and I must
Allow them burn some persons now and then,
Else I should have no peace. What is the news?

THE MARQUIS.

Oh, nothing of importance. Stakes are lit
In Cordova, Tudela, Saragossa.

THE KING.

And nothing further?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes. Count Requesens
One day, when he was drunk, swore by the saints;
His coronet, my liege, did not avail
To save him from the stake in his own town,
Girone. As no lackey had denounced
This nobleman accused of blasphemy,
His household was held guilty, and atoned
By fire and torture for their master's crime.
His very fool was burned.

[GUCHO *leaps up as if startled in his sleep.*

GUCHO (*aside*).

I 'll turn at once
Familiar of the Inquisition! Why,

The devil take me if I don't begin
My work upon the spot. Zounds! burned alive!
A plague upon me, if that 's what I want!

THE KING (*looking at the heap of gold*).
The issue of a bleeding of the Jews;
The race seems made of gold.

GUCHO (*aside*).
I am content
To be a looker-on while others roast.

THE MARQUIS (*to* THE KING).
The Hebrews —

THE KING.
Call them Jews!

THE MARQUIS.
The Jews, my liege,
A numerous, hard-working people, ask,
Prostrate before the King, that he allow them
To live in Spain, nor view with angry eyes
The humble slaves that grovel at his feet.
They ask in fine, my liege, that you revoke
The edict which exiles them.

THE KING.
After that,
What do they want?

THE MARQUIS.
To die upon the soil
Whereon their fathers died, and to remain
In their own country, sire; and I present
Their ransom. Take it.

THE KING.
If the Queen consent,
I will consent. Go beg her to come here.

[*At a sign from* THE KING, GUCHO *goes to the door at the back, and opens it. An officer of the palace appears at the entrance.* GUCHO *speaks to him in a low voice. The officer bows and retires. The door closes.* GUCHO *returns to his former position.*

THE MARQUIS.

The Jews will pass their lives in prayer for you.

THE KING.

It is their money, not their prayers, I want.
Their prayers insult me.

THE MARQUIS.

Gracious King, your fathers
Liked to reign over them. The Jews exiled,
There is a people less within your realm.

THE KING (*imperiously*).

Enough of this. Much care I for a people!
A girl concerns me more. Since I have shut
That grate between myself and her, I can
No longer sleep. She haunts me in my dreams.
Ah, pshaw! you talk to me of politics,
While I love Rose more madly every day.
My thoughts are all of love. And, by the way,
Has Sancho yet become a monk?

THE MARQUIS.

Oh, no.

THE KING.

If he refuse, the scaffold is at hand.
I 've placed them in two convents in this city,
To have them both within my reach. The girl
Is guarded closely in the Assumption Cloister;

The bars of San Antonio hold the boy.
'T was there my ancestor, Don James the Red,
Imprisoned on a time his rebel son.
Don Sancho shall be priest; I 'll have the maid,
I will recapture Rose.

THE MARQUIS.

And the new edict
Concerning convents?

THE KING (*astonished*).

Edict? —

THE MARQUIS.

He 's declared
A felon, traitor, scoffer of his God,
A parricide accursed, who dares to force
The cloister's sacred doors, or lay a hand
On aught they shelter, though he were yourself.

THE KING (*gazing fixedly on* THE MARQUIS).

I enter everywhere, and everywhere
I am the King. The moment is at hand
When I shall seize Don Sancho. Though I am
Long suffering, I gain my end at last.
Rose shall be mine.

THE MARQUIS.

Ah! but you 'll have to deal —

THE KING.

To deal with whom?

THE MARQUIS.

But —

THE KING.

Speak.

THE MARQUIS.

With Torquemada.

THE KING.

What! I, the King!

THE MARQUIS.

And he the inquisitor!

THE KING.

Ah, pshaw!

THE MARQUIS.

My liege, in him the Church exists.
If he grow wrathful —

THE KING.

Well?

THE MARQUIS.

The Church lays hold
Of everything with ease, but does not loose
Her grasp with equal readiness. He is
Inquisitor. His office is to see
That convents have their full supply. Nor nun
Nor monk can fraud or force tear from his hands!
He prowls around the cloisters, shows his teeth,
And bites all who approach the tender lambs
This tawny wolf has under watch and ward.
The king who braves the priest, sire, is not wise.
Your path, my liege, is barred by Torquemada.
He checks your course, and all your wrath is vain.

THE KING.

He is a man and easy to corrupt.

THE MARQUIS.

Well, try.

THE KING.

If 't is my wish to tame this monk —

THE MARQUIS.

Sire, try.

THE KING.

I can bestow all man desires.
Before me proudest heads are lowliest bent;
And first, to get the better of a priest,
Why, there are women.

THE MARQUIS.

He is old.

THE KING.

Well, then,
We have the mitre, purple, a grandeeship,
And many dignities and honours.

THE MARQUIS.

Sire,
He will continue monk.

THE KING.

And money.

THE MARQUIS.

Sire,
He will continue poor.

THE KING.

Ah, yes, this man
Is strong, with all the strength of lowliness
And poverty and age.

[THE KING *crosses his arms and muses.*

Close by myself
To feel that sombre poverty which casts
A shadow on my throne! which, in its power,
Stands on a level with the king!

THE MARQUIS.

Ay, higher!

THE KING.

No!

THE MARQUIS.

Women, honours, gold are powerless
Against this monk.

THE KING.

I could find other means.
Dost understand?

THE MARQUIS.

No. Which?

THE KING.

The right ones, eh?
Dost understand?

THE MARQUIS.

No.

THE KING.

Why, old Arbuez
Was stabbed upon the very altar steps.
Was not that system good?

THE MARQUIS.

It turned out bad.
Old Arbuez became Saint Arbuez,
And that was all. You reign, and you allot
Domains and dignities, or, if you will,
The headsman's axe. But with the hand that tries
To hold the Church, she strives with fiery zeal.
You persecute her and you make her stronger.
The priests have this distinctive quality, —
That when you kill them, they 're the more alive.
They never disappear. From hecatombs
Springs into life that spectral form, the priest.

Their blood 's eternal, and their bones are fruitful.
We crush them living, we invoke them dead.
Ah, sire! you think to break the Church's power.
She bursts at once her bonds by palms and hymns,
By tears and martyrdom. Yes, massacre
The cloister's hypocrite, with malice drunk!
Strike! It is well. Now raise to heaven your eyes.
'T is filled with saints of your own making, sire!
Fold reverent hands and fall upon your knees.
I do admire the Church. For, slave or queen,
She has the final say. She swarms below
Here on this earth; she swarms in heaven above,
And crushed as vermin, rises as a star.

THE KING (*depressed*).

She 's the disease, and I am the diseased.
Thou sayest truth. Brave Rome, and you repent.
We must resign ourselves.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

What does he mean?
The danger with him is that if you want
A certain course to be pursued by him
You must advise the opposite, and if
You wish him to go north, you needs must urge
His footsteps towards the south. This time I see
That he believes my words. My ruse has failed!
The tortuous path that I have found so useful
Avails not here. I must aim at my goal,
And change my style.
[*Aloud.*] Ah! you have let the monk
Grow all too great, and now he has become
Of monstrous size.

THE KING (*musing*).

This Torquemada —

THE MARQUIS.

Sire,
Holds Spain. He is her Pontiff, and where'er
You lay your finger-nail he puts his claw.
He fills your seat. Ah! sire, the time is past
When at your royal pleasure you might go
Into a convent, and with threatening frown
Compel this stubborn Church to own your power.
You then might hang a monk. You dare not touch
His frock at present. Ah, your monk's a trial!
Your gibbets! Strike the priests! Attempt it, sire!
Your laws have everything to fear from his;
And surely he would laugh to see a fight
Between your scaffold and his fiery stake.
The duel is unequal. Sire, the earth
Owns as its lord this monk; and as wild oats
Are set on fire by peasants, living men
Are turned to ashes by his flaming torch.
The palaces appalled like cloisters look;
On every side the clergy sprouts and grows
Like brier and bramble. Everything gives way
Before the frowning monk. "The devil take
The hindmost" is the cry. The proudest crawl,
The bravest tremble. What, my liege, is done
From Cadiz to Tortosa through your realm?
Your subjects are denouncing one another,
Two cousins of your Highness are in chains,
The Marquis Alfonzo and Prince of Viana,
And that coarse hand has even been laid upon
The Infante of Tudela. Lately gay
Was every town and village in our Spain;
To-day a pall of silence over all.
No more the innocent laugh, no more the feast,
A banquet is suspected. Terror, fear,
And mourning reign in all parts of our land,

And this huge Spain is like a festival
When all the lights are quenched. Your forests, sire,
Are used for scaffolds; wood begins to fail.
Crimes true and false are intermingled. All
Is good to feed the fagots. You have seen
Some one pass by you, you are his accomplice.
A son betrays his father, father son.
Who, unaware, lets fall a crucifix
Is burned alive. A word, a gesture, is
A heresy. This horrible monk has looked
On Jesus with a madman's eye. All acts
Are heinous crimes. To swear by Solomon,
To have the air of whispering to the devil,
To pare the nails, go barefoot on fast days,
To wed a wife that 's too old or too young,
To turn a corpse's face towards the wall,
Or not to fly before those who bind tight
Their loins with leathern cord, to lay a cloth
Upon one's table on a Saturday,
To drive the ox at Christmas from the stable,
To name God oftener than Jesus, or
To hide one's self, — all these lead to the stake.
Repeating verses in a funeral train,
Or weeping, in the shade, behind a door,
Or watching in some lonely desert spot
The rising of night's earliest star, — these, too,
Are crimes. These blazing piles devour, O King,
And mount and ever mount, and more and more
With this red dawn empurple all the sky
Above you, sire. It is your subjects' blood
Which you are robbed of. Soon you shall not have
The soldiers which your wars require. Just now —
But what avail my words! the King cares not, —
The King, who by a word could change it all.
But no! — The Holy Office lately placed

All Spain within a padded cell, and it
Has come to pass your subjects scarcely know you.
[*He points to the gallery at the back and the curtain which closes it.* GUCHO *is listening attentively.*
This very day, O King, beneath your window
A monstrous pile of fire will flame to heaven,
And there beneath the gaze of wanton eyes
Shall women turn and writhe clad but with flame.
At the four corners statues will arise, —
Four huge, black prophets built of hollow stone,
And full of living men, — Colossuses,
Whose hideous bellowing will be heard around.
The shuddering fire will lick their open mouths,
And at the end naught but these giants stand.
Your people, haggard, horror-stricken, see
You and your kingdoms vanish in the smoke
That wraps up these four phantoms; for all light
Comes from the hateful Quemadero. Sire,
You disappear when you 're surrounded by
The shadow of the executioner.

[THE KING *sits down on a folding-stool, overwhelmed.*

THE KING.

All this is for the Church's gain.

THE MARQUIS.

And for
The kingdom's loss. Castile with charnel houses
Is covered. Far and near rise cries of fright.
[*Drawing near to* THE KING.
Alas! you struggle vainly. You are caught.
Above your Spain is stretched a sombre web,
Through which you may see God, like some vague star;
A gloomy net, that Satan fixed to earth
And spun out, thread by thread, from Jehovah's bowels;

A snare in which the wretched human mind
Is spent and broken; an immense rose-window,
Belonging to an infinite church, through which
The light of hell on the high altar gleams.
There shudder horror, night, and deadly fear;
And earth regards with woful eyes that thing
Which it has ever o'er it in the dark.
It dreams of that old Baal in whose clasp
It erstwhile stifled. To grow great is wrong;
To think, a grievous sin; to live is boldness.
Existence is a peril. At the centre
Of that dark web is seen the priest, that spider,
And always, close by him, that fly, the King.
[THE KING *bends his head.* THE MARQUIS *watches him, and continues.*
Faith, it is strange and terrible as well
That out of that vile yarn, vows, cloister, rule,
And dogma, there should spring a web so vast
That it could snare an eagle; but 't is done.
The eagle 's caught, and at the present hour
Gives but one little tremble of his wing
Within the net. Before you threatening stand
The missal, Bible, gospel; and for you
To will is an impossibility,
To love you dare not; you dare reign no longer.
The kings of old, hard as the mountain rock,
And long-haired as the woods, had prouder thoughts.
Ah, well! the present is, more than the past,
But dust. A maiden's beauty wins a king.
This gentle sovereign crawls along, nor tries
A single royal roar. There is no more
Aught great upon the earth except the priest;
And he, this monk — oh, why do children dare
Come into life! — this monk is King. He has
Beneath his sandals you! He drives the bolts

Upon the human soul. He 's greater far
Than bishop or than abbess in the eyes
Of deacon or of nun. He comes; the law
Bows down before him. Lowly, like a reed,
The sceptre bends. The sword is terrified.
His fixed eyes a boundless stupor spread.
Man is his target, empire is his goal,
And this dark spy of God, who throws o'er all
His terrible shadow, ambushes the world.

[*Looking* THE KING *in the face.*

A time will come when history shall say:
"It was the age of fire. It was the time
Of slavery and darkness. Its great work? —
'T was ashes; and a fork to stir the embers
Replaced the sceptre once Pelagio held.
The name borne by the monarch? Torquemada."

THE KING (*rising*).

Thou liest, Marquis, in thy throat. His name
Was Ferdinand, and neither monk nor Pope
Shall bring to pass that it be otherwise,
Or that I be not King, — I, who am both
The tiger and the lion! and I 'll prove
My kingly state by cutting off some heads.
Go, get me men, and see they have their swords;
Then straightway to the Assumption Convent march,
And seize the Infanta. Smite all who resist;
'T is my good pleasure. Let all bend the knee,
And be reduced to utter nothingness,
As much before you as if on a sudden
They had beheld my face! And now the order.

[*He approaches the table, takes a pen and sheet of parchment, and writes rapidly.*

"Submit, it is the law. Whatever act
The Marquis does, it is willed by the King."

[*He signs and hands the parchment to* THE MARQUIS.

And if there be resistance, smite, destroy,
Burn, crush, exterminate, and leave no man
Alive, or standing wall when you have quit
The cursed spot on which that convent stood.
[GUCHO *is listening with more attention than ever.*

THE MARQUIS.

And if some monk should —

THE KING.

Death!

THE MARQUIS.

Or trooper?

THE KING.

Chains!
A hundred cut-throats of my African guard
Take with you. You 'll find they 're enough to force
The barriers of one convent.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

And of two.
[*Aloud.*] Although it has the sanction of the King,
This stroke is hazardous, my gracious liege.

THE KING.

Ah, pshaw!

THE MARQUIS.

When I have taken the Infanta,
I must conceal her somewhere.

THE KING.

Surely.

THE MARQUIS.

Where?

THE KING.

Within my private park. 'T is dark and lonely.
You know I leave this evening?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes, I know.
But for a day.

THE KING.

I journey to Triana.
On my return I would wish to find
The Infanta in —

THE MARQUIS.

The private park?

THE KING.

Yes, there.
I 'm master.

THE MARQUIS.

But the key?

[THE KING *goes to the sideboard, and opens a drawer.*

I 've two, for I
Alone can enter there.

[*He takes out two keys, and hands one to* THE MARQUIS.

I give you one.

[*He puts the other in the drawer, which he pushes back. When* THE KING'S *back is turned,* GUCHO *creeps under the different articles of furniture, opens the drawer again, and takes out the key which* THE KING *has just placed there.*

GUCHO (*aside*).

I take the other.

[*He shuts the drawer, and thrusts the key in his pocket.*

THE KING.

Ah! the monks are strong,
The priests are great! Ah! Torquemada reigns!
Well, we shall see.

[*The voice of an Usher, outside, announcing:*

The Queen, our sovereign Lady.

[*Enter* THE QUEEN, *all in jet-black, with the royal crown on her head. She makes a profound reverence to* THE KING, *who returns it, without taking off his cap.* THE QUEEN *proceeds to one of the arm-chairs at the extremity of the table and sits down; then remains motionless, as if she neither saw nor heard anything.* THE KING *and* THE QUEEN *have each a rosary at the girdle.*

THE KING (*in a low voice to* THE MARQUIS).

Make haste; for speed is vital to success.
Go, Marquis, do what I have bid thee do.

[*Enter* THE DUKE OF ALAVA. *He proceeds towards* THE KING.

What is it, Duke?

THE DUKE (*after saluting* THE KING *and* QUEEN).

The deputies, my liege,
Sent by the Jews you banish from your realm,
Sue for the favour, gracious King and Queen,
Of lying prostrate at your Highness' feet.

THE KING.

'T is granted. Let them enter. [THE DUKE *leaves.*
[*In a low voice to* THE MARQUIS.] Run at once
To the Assumption Convent, and lay hold
Of the Infanta.

THE MARQUIS (*aside*).

Then to San Antonio.

THE KING.

Away!

THE MARQUIS.

But —

THE KING.

What?

THE MARQUIS.

If the Inquisitor? —

THE KING.

That monk indeed! He is the earthworm, and
The dragon I.

SCENE III.

The King, The Queen, The Jews.

Through the door at the back, wide open, come a frightened and ragged crowd between two rows of halberds and pikes. They are the deputies of the Jews, men, women, and children, all covered with ashes and in tattered clothes, barefooted, with ropes about their necks. Some, mutilated and enfeebled by torture, drag themselves along on crutches or stumps; others, deprived of their eyes, are led by children. At their head is the Grand Rabbi, Moses-ben-Habib. *All have the yellow badge prescribed for their race on their torn apparel. At some distance from the table,* The Rabbi *stops and falls on his knees. All behind him prostrate themselves. The old men strike the floor with their foreheads. Neither* The King *nor* The Queen *looks at them. They seem to be gazing at vacancy, above all these heads.*

THE RABBI (*on his knees*).

Your Highness of Castile,
Of Aragon, our sovereign King and Queen!
Your trembling subjects are in sore distress,
And, praying first to God, we come to you,

With naked feet and rope about our necks,
And bring our groans and tears to you, O Kings!
For we are lying in death's very shadow,
A number of us are about to be
Flung on the fagots, and for all the rest,
Old men and women, exile is decreed.
Your edicts, King and Queen, o'erwhelm us all.
We weep, our fathers shudder in their graves, —
You cause the mournful sepulchres to tremble.
Be merciful. Our hearts are meek and true.
Shut up within our little homes, we live
Alone and humble. All our laws are plain, —
So very simple that a little child
Might set them down in writing. Never Jew
Is seen to sing or laugh. We pay the tribute;
We never ask how large the sum may be.
We 're trod upon while lying on the ground;
We 're like the garment of a murdered man.
To God be glory! But must Israel
Defenceless, driving ox and ass and dog
Before him, flee, dispersed in every sense,
With new-born suckling babes and children weaned!
Must we ne'er be a people, wanderers ever!
O King and Queen, do not let us be chased
With goad of pike, and God for you shall open
Celestial gates. Have mercy on us. We
Are dashed to earth. Shall we no longer see
Our trees and fields of corn? Shall mothers have
No longer milk within their breasts? The beasts
Are in the forests, happy with their mates;
The nests sleep calmly, couched beneath the leaves;
The hind brings up her little ones in peace.
Ah! let us also live within our caves,
Beneath our squalid roofs. For there we dwell
Almost like slaves within a convict pen,

But near our fathers' graves. In mercy deign
To suffer us to rest beneath your feet
Which we have bathed with tears! Alas! the woe
Of wandering along the distant ways!
Then let us drink the waters of our streams,
And live upon our fields, and prosperous days
Shall wait upon your steps. Alas! we wring
Our hands in desperation. Spare us, Kings,
The agony of exile, and the dole
Of stern, eternal, endless loneliness!
Grant us our country, grant our native skies!
The bread we eat with tears is bitter bread.
Be not the wind, though we be but the dust.
[*Pointing to the gold on the table.*
Behold our ransom. Deign to take it, Kings,
And, oh! protect us. Look on our despair.
Be angels o'er us, but not angels dark,
But angels good and mild. The shadow cast
By gloomy wings is not the same, O Kings,
As that the white wing leaves. Recall your ban.
We beg it in the name of those great kings,
Your sacred ancestors, the lion-hearted,
And by the tombs of sovereigns august,
Who shone serene in wisdom's light. We place
Our hearts, O rulers of the human race,
Our prayers, our sorrows in the little hands
Of Joan, the Infanta, innocent
And like unto the wildwood strawberry
Where lights the bee. O King, O Queen, have mercy!

[*A moment of silence. Absolute impassiveness of* THE KING *and* QUEEN. *Neither turns the eye.* THE DUKE OF ALAVA, *who is standing before the table with naked sword, touches the shoulder of* THE GRAND RABBI *with the flat.* THE GRAND RABBI *rises, and with the other Jews, retires backward with head bent down. The*

guards form a line and force them back. The door remains open after they leave. THE KING *beckons to* THE DUKE OF ALAVA, *who approaches.*

THE KING (*to* THE DUKE).

The Queen and I would privately discuss
The edict. Duke, arrest whoever comes,
Although he be a prince. Whoever dares
To enter here shall surely lose his head.
Go, close the door, and guard the passage well.

[THE DUKE *lowers his sword, bows, raises his sword again, and goes. The two leaves of the door shut.* THE KING *and* QUEEN *are alone. During this scene* GUCHO *has disappeared under the tapestry that covers the table, where he is concealed.*

SCENE IV.

THE KING, THE QUEEN, GUCHO *under the table.* THE KING *and* QUEEN *regard each other earnestly and silently for a time. At last* THE QUEEN *lowers her eyes and looks at the money on the table.*

THE QUEEN.

A sum of thirty thousand marks of gold.

THE KING.

A sum of thirty thousand marks of gold.

THE QUEEN.

But they are an accursed race, and all
Star-gazers.

THE KING.

Thirty thousand marks of gold
Make up six hundred thousand piasters,
And that is twenty million sequins.

THE QUEEN.

Sequins?

THE KING.

Yes, sequins, which, to Moorish besants changed,
Would make enough to load a galley, Queen!

THE QUEEN.

But still a Jew becomes invisible
By lighting fingers of a buried child.

THE KING.

'T is true, no doubt.

THE QUEEN.

They would a vessel load?

THE KING.

Ay, to the very deck.

THE QUEEN.

With besants?

THE KING.

Yes,
And changed to silver douros, we would have
In weight as much again.

THE QUEEN.

My mind 's confused,
Suppose we said a pater?
[*She takes her rosary. A moment of silence.* THE KING *touches the piles of gold and stirs them.*

THE KING (*in an undertone*).

With this gold
I might without expense on Boabdil
Make war.

THE QUEEN (*all the time telling her beads*).

If I should be the first to die,
Swear to me, sir, to take no other wife.

THE KING (*in an undertone*).

Yes, with this gold make war —

THE QUEEN.

Will you not swear?

THE KING.

Swear what? — Oh, yes, of course.
[*Musing*] This gold would pay
For all expenses, all. Granada would
Be ours, a jewel in our diadem.

[THE QUEEN, *having finished her prayers, places the rosary on the table.*

THE QUEEN.

Sir, let us take the gold, and, all the same,
Exile the Jews, whom I cannot accept
As subjects.

[THE KING *raises his head.* THE QUEEN *speaks more strongly.*

Then let us exile the Jews
And keep their money.

THE KING.

I was thinking of it.
But such a deed might well discourage others
From acting like the Jews.

THE QUEEN (*looking at the money*).

With all this gold!
And in your hands —

THE KING.

In yours.

THE QUEEN.

Might more be asked?

THE KING.

Well, later on.

[*He handles the piles of gold.*

Granada I could wrest
From the vile bastard crescent. Though we kept
The Jews, yet still we might expel the Moors.

THE QUEEN (*wavering*).

'T is true.

THE KING.

A compensation.

THE QUEEN.

Yes, a choice
Between Gomorrahs.

THE KING.

Then do we accept
The money?

THE QUEEN.

Yes.

[*He takes a pen and writes some lines on a parchment, after consulting* THE QUEEN *by a look.*

THE KING.

Well, then. "The edict is
Annulled which banishes that miscreant tribe,
The Jews, and parts them from the Spanish people;

It is forbid to light the stake prepared;
'T is ordered that imprisoned Jews be freed."

[THE KING *signs, then hands the pen and parchment to* THE QUEEN.

THE QUEEN (*taking the pen*).

'T is settled.

[*Just as* THE QUEEN *is about to sign, the great door opens with much noise.* THE KING *and* QUEEN *turn around in amazement.* GUCHO *thrusts out his head.* TORQUEMADA *appears on the threshold in his Dominican robe and with an iron crucifix in his hand.*

SCENE V.

THE KING, THE QUEEN, TORQUEMADA. TORQUEMADA *looks neither at* THE KING *nor* THE QUEEN. *He has his eyes fixed on the crucifix.*

TORQUEMADA.

Once for thirty silver pieces
Did Judas sell thee; now this King and Queen
Sell thee for thirty thousand golden crowns.

THE QUEEN.

O Heaven!

TORQUEMADA (*casting the crucifix on the pile of gold*).

Advance, and seize him, Jews!

THE QUEEN.

Good father!

TORQUEMADA.

Rejoice, ye Jews! this King and Queen, as it
Is writ, deliver to you Jesus Christ.

THE QUEEN.

My father!

TORQUEMADA (*looking them both in the face*).

King, be thou accursed! be thou
Accursed, O Queen!

THE QUEEN.

Forgiveness!

TORQUEMADA (*stretching his arm above them*).

On your knees!

[THE QUEEN *falls on her knees;* THE KING *hesitates, trembling.*

Both! [THE KING *falls on his knees.*

[*Pointing to* ISABEL.] On this side, the Queen.

[*Pointing to* FERDINAND.] On that, the King.

A pile of gold between. Ah! you are king,
And you are queen!

[*He seizes the crucifix, and raises it high above his head.*

And this is God. Behold!
I have surprised you in the very act,
Red-handed. Kiss the ground.

THE QUEEN (*prostrating herself*).

Forgive us, father!

TORQUEMADA.

Oh, horror!

THE QUEEN.

Give us absolution, father!

TORQUEMADA.

Measureless insolence! — It is thy reign,
O Antichrist, at last! The Jews restored!

The auto-da-fe proscribed! The helpful stake
To be no longer lit! These sovereigns
Forbid it. So, that wretch, the sceptre, dares
To touch the cross! The prince, that bandit, dares
To close his ears to all that Christ hath said!
The time has come when ye must be forewarned.
The Holy Office has its rights o'er you.
The Pope alone 's exempt from its decrees,
But kings are not. Our banner has the right
To go into your palaces, proud Kings!
At every hour, e'en while you sleep or eat,
And with it bring its melancholy doom!
Kings, those false gods, have ever been the aim
At which the thunderbolts of Heaven are hurled,
For Heaven hates kings. O princes, all your laws
Are vain and worthless. Ours alone are true:
We are the wheat, and you the tares. Some day
The reaper's scythe shall cut enormous swaths!
Kings, we endure you, but denounce your crimes.
Each day into the gulf we cast your names
Where dark and lonely pangs await your advent!
The floors of hell are paved with skulls of kings.
Ah, yes! because your ports are filled with sails,
Because your soldiers throng your camps, you think
That you are strong. God with quiescent eye
Amid the stars is meditating. Tremble.

THE QUEEN.

Forgive!

THE KING (*rising*).

My lord inquisitor, the King
And Queen, with contrite heart, and as a sign
Of their devotion to the faith, intend
Repairing wrongs they were about to do.
The Jews shall be expelled; and we, besides,

Empower you, father, and the Holy Office,
And all your holy priests to light at once
The stake.

TORQUEMADA.

And do you think I waited?

[*He descends the three steps, goes to the gallery at the back, and violently draws the curtain aside.*

Look!

[*Night is beginning to fall. Through the wide, open lattice at the back of the gallery, the square of La Tablada is seen covered with an immense crowd. In the centre of the square is the Quemadero. An enormous piece of masonry all bristling with flames, filled with stakes and posts, and with those condemned in sanbenitos, who are seen through the smoke. Barrels of lighted pitch are nailed to the tops of the posts, and empty in flames on the heads of the condemned. Women, whom the fire has rendered naked, are burning, fastened to piles. Cries are heard. At the four corners of the Quemadero are four gigantic statues, called the four Evangelists, reddened by the blaze. They have holes and openings through which are seen men howling and arms writhing like living brands. The whole has a terrific aspect of torture and conflagration.* THE KING *and* THE QUEEN *look on appalled.* GUCHO, *under the table, stretches his neck and tries to see.* TORQUEMADA, *in meditation, sates his eyes with the Quemadero.*

TORQUEMADA.

O festival of glory and of joy!
O grand and terrible clemency of flames!
Deliverance forever! O ye damned!
Ye are absolved! The stake on earth hath quenched
The hell below. O blessed stake, by which
The soul mounts up! Thou honourest the fire,

The shame of hell. O outlet bordering on
The radiant pathway, gate of paradise,
Once more reopened for the human race!
O ardent pity with thy numberless
Caresses, mystic ransom of hell's slaves.
Auto da-fe! thou 'rt pardon, kindness, light,
And fire and life! a dazzling splendour on
The face of God! Oh, what a grand demise!
What souls are saved! Jews, sinners, infidels, —
Ah, my dear children, one brief, sudden pang
Rewards you with eternal happiness;
Man is no more accursed, no more exiled.
Salvation opens in the depths of heaven.
Love wakes, and yonder is his wondrous triumph!
What ecstasy! to enter heaven at once!
Not languish by the way! [*Cries heard from the stakes.*
Hear ye the howls
Of Satan as he sees them all escape?
Let the eternal felon weep and wail
In his eternal den. With these two hands
I 've pushed his huge red door. Oh, how he gnashed,
When on him I made fast those hideous leaves,
Forever, Never! And the Wicked One
Remains behind the sombre wall. [*He looks up to the sky.*
Oh, I
Have healed the grisly wound his shadow made.
Ah! paradise was maimed; and in the side
Of heaven was that ulcer, burning hell,
Ensanguined hell; o'er hell I 've placed the flame,
The healing flame, and as mine eyes behold
The boundless sky, I see the cicatrice.
It was the spear-thrust in thy side, O Christ!
Hosanna! the eternal wound is cured.
[*He looks at the Quemadero.*
Ye rubies of the flame! Ye precious stones

Of fiery coals! Blaze up, ye brands! burn, embers!
O sovran fire, beam brightly! shine, O stake!
Thou casket of bright sparks soon to be stars!
The soul, freed from the body's vesture, flies,
And from the bath of torments bliss comes forth!
O splendour! fierce magnificence of flame!
Ha! Satan, my black foe, what sayest thou?
[*In an ecstasy.*] O fire, thou washest all foul stains away!
Supreme transfiguration! act of faith!
We are two fork-bearers, the Fiend and I,
Two masters of the flames. I succour souls,
And he is man's destroyer. We are both
Two executioners, and by like means
We make — one, heaven, and the other, hell;
He makes the evil, and I make the good;
He 's in the sewer, in the temple I;
And the black quivering shadow views us both.
[*He turns again to the condemned*
O dear, beloved brethren! but for me
You all were lost. You now are cleansed from sin
In that piscina by its writhing flames.
Ah! for the passing moment you will curse me;
But ah! dear children! you will give me thanks
When you behold from what you have escaped;
Because, like Michael the archangel, I
Have also slain; because white seraphim,
Who stoop above the pit of sulphur, mock
The marvellous miscarriage of the gulf;
Because your howls of hatred in the light
Shall stammer, and, in stupefaction, end
In songs of love! Alas! what pangs were mine
To see you in the torture chambers lie,
With wails and tears and shrieks and writhing limbs!
To see you by the vice and pincers torn!
But now you 're free! Depart! ascend to heaven!

Pass into paradise!

[*He stoops and seems to be looking at something beneath the earth.*

No, thou shalt have
No longer souls! [*He stands erect.*
The Lord hath given us
The help we asked, and man 's freed from the gulf.
Depart! away! across the burning gloom
And through the great winged flames, the whirling smoke
Bears to the skies the living spirit saved
From the dead flesh! and all old human crimes
Are torn up by the roots. One had his sins,
Another had his errors, fault or vice;
Each soul had in itself a monster who
Would nibble at its light and champ its wings.
The angel faded fast, the demon's prey.
Now all is burned, and by the light of tombs,
And in the presence of our Saviour Christ,
The radiant and august division 's made.
Fall into dust, ye dragons! Take your flight,
Ye doves! For you whom hell had in its grip
'T is liberty! From darkness mount to light!
For time take in exchange eternity!

ACT III.

SCENE. — *It is night. A terrace of the private park, called Huerto del Rey in Seville. The terrace is broad. It communicates on the left and right with alleys of trees. At the back it is crossed by a staircase, the steps of which are not seen, by which the terrace is reached from the garden. Only the top of the head is first seen of those who arrive on the terrace by this staircase, then the body gradually comes into view, until they are on a level with the terrace. On the terrace is a bench of marble. The lower part of the garden is lost in obscurity. The moon is rising during the act.*

SCENE I.

TORQUEMADA, GUCHO. *They enter by the alley on the right,* GUCHO *conducting* TORQUEMADA. GUCHO *presses his two bawbles against his breast with one hand, and with the other presents a key to* TORQUEMADA.

GUCHO.

Deign to remember that 't is I who give
The key of the King's private park to you, —
I, Gucho, fool of the said King, our sire.
What crime are they about? I cannot tell.
I 'm all at sea, and find it better far
That you be here to see with your own eyes.
The cloister's sacred rights are put in peril;
Likewise a maiden whom the King would force,
Although she was betrothed to his young cousin,
With the consent of all her family:
'T is all I know about this wicked plot.
I am the king's buffoon, my lord; 't is I
Who make him laugh, — that is, when he 's inclined.

[TORQUEMADA *takes the key from the hand of* GUCHO.

GUCHO (*aside*).

Denunciation 's bad ; but to be grilled ! —
Ugh ! it is worse. My choice is made. Oh, thank you!
I was not born with a silver spoon,
And do not count on bettering my fate
By shining in an auto-da-fe, my friend.
Shine, by all means, but as a wit, not candle.
The question is to whom I 'm faithful now.
Why, to myself. You gaby, did you think
I was a hero or some dashing knight,
Or surly, stubborn fellow, bent to be
A martyr ? You have made a great mistake.
What will occur ? Of that I wash my paws.
Besides, I hardly think the King would die
Of grief if I were roasted. You old fellow
Has but to raise his finger, and his Highness
Plumps flat upon his belly. Then, denounce,
I say. Why not ? Think only of yourself.
I 'm devilish sure to get out of a scrape,
And sheer away, I tell you !

TORQUEMADA (*regarding the key, aside*).

Coward King !
Both vile and wicked. Scarce is he absolved
When he begins again.

[GUCHO *has gone to the back of the terrace. He gives a look into the obscure depths of the garden.*

GUCHO (*aside*).

I see a group
Beneath a tree. It looks as if they were
About to mount the marble staircase. There
Are three ! Why three ? Oh, leave aside the why,
Let everything behind me go to smash,
If I get off scot-free !

TORQUEMADA (*aside, looking at the garden*).

So this, then, is
The secret park, the shelter of his vices.

[*He walks with slow steps into the alley on his left.*

GUCHO (*aside, looking down the staircase*).

Ah! here is some one coming. I am off.

[*He leaves by the side he entered.* THE MARQUIS DE FUENTAL *is seen coming up first; then* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *appear, both in the habit of novices, as in the first act.* THE MARQUIS *conducts them with his finger on his lips. He looks around him cautiously.*

SCENE II.

THE MARQUIS DE FUENTAL, DON SANCHO, DONNA ROSE.

THE MARQUIS.

Your novice garb, if it were day, would be
A peril. But 't is night, the place is lonely,
None see us. O great God! You 're free at last,
And not a soul suspects that you are here.
I did not take the usual path, and so
I was not followed. I have sent away
The people I employed. I tremble, still,
For nothing is secure. We must have clothes
And horses, and we must take flight at once.
All should be ready ere the morning dawns.

[*Looking down the lonely alleys of the park.*

Oh! I made fast the gate. No danger there.
The King alone can enter. He 's away.
[*To* DON SANCHO.] Confide in me, my prince, and trust me, Madame;
To free you from your prisons cost me much.

To save you next will be a frightful task;
But yet I am resolved, and feel my strength
Increase before the peril. To you both
I consecrate my life. The first step was
To take you from the convent, and the next
Must be to take you out of Spain. Alas!
My mind is fertile in resources. Yet
To pass across the frontier how shall we
Devise a plan? This Torquemada holds
All Spain within his grasp, and of the King's
Abasement makes his greatness. I have forced
Two convents, and the Grand Inquisitor
Will surely track my footsteps. Here, so far,
We are untroubled. But before the dawn
We must seek out some other refuge, for
The King may come. Alas! what shall we do?
Where find a person who would shelter you
And wish to save you? Yes, some monk alone
Could do it. Priests are now all-powerful;
I 'll search for one. But no, they 're traitors all,
And sometimes sell those who have purchased them.
Oh! how I wish you safely placed in France!
There is another source of fear, besides,
I cannot hide from you. This private park,
Although it is a lonely spot, is near
The palace of the Holy Office. Nay,
The rampart that surrounds it meets the wall
That girds the prisons of the Inquisition.
I leave you for a moment. Do we fly
Or die together? Yes! I go to seek
A refuge for you. Ah! I tremble. Still,
You are alive. God guard you!

DON SANCHO.

'T is to you
That we owe all!

THE MARQUIS.

O my poor banished friends,
I must find means to baffle your pursuers.
Await me here.

DON SANCHO.

How can we thank you, say?

THE MARQUIS.

By being happy.

[*He goes out in the same direction in which* GUCHO *has gone.*

SCENE III.

DON SANCHO, DONNA ROSE.

DON SANCHO.

Ah! I quake with fear.
To see thee once again is heaven; but
To tremble for thee, ah! what dread despair!

DONNA ROSE.

God joins us. God will save us too.

[*She gazes on him with rapture.*

I love thee!

[*They rush passionately into each other's arms*

DON SANCHO (*gazing at the sky*).

Oh! why from yonder starry heights does no
Immortal being swoop through air, and cast
His shadow over thee? Has heaven no more
Its angels, or, alas! have angels now
No longer wings?

DONNA ROSE.

We have a faithful friend
In this poor man.

DON SANCHO.

Alas! he is himself
Dismayed. On every side there 's danger.

[TORQUEMADA *appears. He is among the trees in darkness. He has heard these last words. He is listening and gazing. He watches* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *with a sort of increasing surprise. They do not see him.* DON SANCHO *takes the hand of* DONNA ROSE *and raises his eyes to heaven.*

Oh!
Who then is likely to protect thee?

TORQUEMADA.

I!

[*Both turn round in amazement.*

SCENE IV.

DON SANCHO, DONNA ROSE, TORQUEMADA.

TORQUEMADA.

I know you now.

DONNA ROSE.

It is the aged monk!

TORQUEMADA.

I am the man Gomorrah had condemned
And Sodom struck; but for your aid, my children,
I was within the sepulchre. You came,

My stranger friends, and gave me freedom. You,
The dove and eagle, dragged me from the tomb.
To you I owe to see the light of day.
Ah! you have saved me, now it is my turn!

DONNA ROSE.

Yes, 't is the monk!

TORQUEMADA.

Your robes of serge declare
That to the Virgin both are consecrate.
I find you such as when I saw you first.
I was no longer living, though not dead;
You came like two bright angels from on high,
And saved me. God in marvellous ways to-day
Has led me on your road. You cry for help,
I stretch you out my hand. God has employed
Saint Dominick to watch the conduct of
Pedro the Second; me, of Ferdinand,
That guilty prince. I heard you as I passed.
You seem in peril. Are you prisoners, then?
What succour do you need? God gained for me,
Some duty to perform, I knew not what,
An entrance into this suspicious place,
This cavern dark. I find you grieving here,
Nor am surprised, since God conducts us both,
And, step by step, guides you and me. I was
Within the tomb. You came. Now, captives too,
You tremble in this dismal spot. I come.
Without me you would perish. But for you
I was destroyed. As you were unforeseen,
So I am unexpected. Wherefore, then,
Have you come hither? Wherefore in your fate
Have I a part? You were the miracle,
I am the wonder. God knows what he does.

SANCHO (*to* DONNA ROSE).

'T is he!

TORQUEMADA.

No longer fear, for I am there.
I have a dim perception of some plot.
Recluse and monk, I yet know what men are.
I love you, and I will defend you 'gainst
The King himself.

DON SANCHO.

You are, then, near the King?

TORQUEMADA.

Above.

DON SANCHO.

Pray, who, then, are you?

TORQUEMADA.

Nothing by
Myself, by Jesus everything.

DON SANCHO.

Your name?

TORQUEMADA.

My name 's Deliverance. I am he who through
The dread transparency of earth beholds
The hell beneath, and all the devils of hell
Whom, haggard and dismayed, my gaze pursues;
And I perceive the bottom of that gulf
Which all must fear, — that sombre, awful fire;
And I possess the urn shall quench its flames.
But tell me, you — how do men call you?

DON SANCHO.

Sancho,
Infante of Burgos.

DONNA ROSE.

And Rose, Infanta
Of Orthez.

DON SANCHO.

We 're betrothed.

TORQUEMADA.

You have but ta'en
The vows a dispensation may annul.
How comes it you are here?

DON SANCHO.

The King by force
Has put me in a convent; also her.
We fled.

TORQUEMADA.

For which you 'll pay a fine. The King
Shall pay at higher rate. His fault has been
A graver one. It is a crime to make
God's Holy Place the prison of the King,
And no one goes into a convent but
Of his own wish. You 're free. Be hopeful, Rose!
Have courage, Sancho! What do you wish more?

DON SANCHO.

To marry, father.

TORQUEMADA.

I am well content,
And I will marry you myself.

DONNA ROSE.

My lord!

[*She is about to throw herself at his feet.* TORQUEMADA, *by a gesture, prevents her.*

TORQUEMADA.

Unto the dead, the joys of Paradise;
Unto the living, happiness: it is
That which I bring, who, calm and humble, hold
A torch and palm in either hand. May you
Be happy!

DON SANCHO.

Oh, what bliss! I know not why,
When I 'm near you, I fear no more the King.
If I feared any one, it would be you!
You are like some strange providence above
Our heads, at once tremendous and supreme.

TORQUEMADA.

Like Rachel, who saw Jacob and did wed,
The patriarch, Rose, you shall be the bride
Of Sancho, and the grace of God will foil
The projects of this King, which I divine.
Yes, I shall save you both. Depend on me.

DONNA ROSE.

Whoever you may be, priest, bishop, thanks!
May Heaven's choicest blessings on you fall!
O saintly father, 't was a sacred hour
When God permitted us to hear your cry
Within the tomb!

DON SANCHO.

I seem to see it all:
It was a lovely April day, and I
Was gathering roses, she was running after
The butterflies, the words we whispered low
Were blended with the sunlight; evening came,
When suddenly I hear a cry. 'T was like
A call for help from some one dying; then
I see a stone, and listen —

DONNA ROSE.

And you said:
"A man is underneath! Come, let us save him!"
But, then, the stone too heavy was, alas!

DON SANCHO.

And, Rose, a cross of iron stood quite near —

DONNA ROSE.

And then you tore it down.

[*Movement of terror on the part of* TORQUEMADA.

DON SANCHO.

You 're right, it was
A first-rate lever. Thanks to that same cross,
The tomb was opened, you escaped alive.

TORQUEMADA (*aside*).

O heavens! they are damned!

DON SANCHO.

We both worked hard:
I lifted up the stone, she threw her weight
Upon the bar, and so the pit was opened.

TORQUEMADA (*aside*).

A cross torn down! a major sacrilege!
The gulf, the eternal gulf, yawns under them!
They are beyond salvation. O great God!
Beyond the enormous shadow Calvary casts.
Oh, wretched ones! it is not with the King
They have to deal, it is with God.
[*To* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE.] Reflect.
Are you quite sure this lever was a cross?

DON SANCHO.

I am quite sure. 'T was standing at the foot
Of an old wall, deep in the withered grass.
I seized it with both hands.

TORQUEMADA (*aside*).

A cross torn down!
A cross! No matter. I must save them; but
In different mode.

[*He waves them an adieu with his hand.*

I shall be with you soon.

DON SANCHO.

Here, in this gloomy hour, we have no friends,
No refuge; our salvation lies in you,
My lord.

TORQUEMADA.

Oh, yes! I 'll surely save you both.

[*He goes out by the back, and is seen slowly descending the staircase.*

SCENE V.

DON SANCHO, DONNA ROSE.

DONNA ROSE.

Let us upon our knees give thanks to God, —
Help from on high! The miracles that he
Hath wrought for us! How quick we are to hope!
Is it not true, Don Sancho? How we catch
At every branch! The man we saved is in
That house, and saves us too. Yes, I have faith,
I hope. Dost think I 'm right?

DON SANCHO.

Yes, hope, my angel!
He owes to us his life, he gives us life.
Hope! Ah! my soul is drunk with rapturous joy!
[*He draws her towards him.*
Come! come! let 's breathe at last! This shadow made
By wings of seraphim, — it cools our brows
After so many woes. A hand is opened
Between us and the stars.

DONNA ROSE.

Yes, 't is the hand
Of God who shields us.

DON SANCHO.

Say, dost hear the songs
Of Paradise draw near?
[*Pointing to the park and the clumps of trees.*
All nature 's like
The music of a lyre.

DONNA ROSE.

Ah! now we see
Each other once again, what we would say
Starts to the lips, — the past, the present, all
We suffered, wished, or thought, the sleepless nights,
God and his mercy, men who are so wicked —
At last the soul flows over, and we say:
"I love thee!" then we know all has been said.
O love, I have wept much! When hope was lost,
When I have seen myself dragged to the cloister,
When I have seen the thread of our own fate
Dissevered, and our two hearts torn asunder,
And — oh! the horror of it — when I had
Some vague conception of the King's designs,
I felt myself tender at once and strong,

Invincible and proud, and, oh! how oft
I wished to die!

[*A dim moonlight is beginning to mingle with the dark perspective of the horizon.*

DON SANCHO.

And I — But, Rose, let us
Forget it all. It is the heart alone
That lives, 't is love alone that stands. All else
Sinks down and dies. We are about to be —
Yes! married, saved! I place faith in this priest.
He gives us back what he received from us.
Ah, let us love and live! Behold the moon
Rise o'er yon mountains; see these waters, groves
Filled with an infinite soul. This beauty, Rose,
Means mercy. All the charms strewed round
This lovely spot bid us believe, and speak
Of God to us. Fear nothing, lovely soul!
O sinless soul, at peace at last! Grief is
The lily; hope, — it is the dew. When grief
Unfolds its leaves, God weeps from tenderness,
And that is hope. Our sorrows, cries, have moved him.
Guardians unawares preserve us. I
See shadows all around to do us service.
What should I say to thee? I love thee. Ah!
We 're conquerors, and all the azure depths
Of heaven are in our hearts. Then let us hope!

DONNA ROSE.

Oh, yes! I feel some one shall set us free.
I hope. Hope is new birth.

DON SANCHO.

And love is life.

DONNA ROSE.

What had I in my mind? Ah! now I know!
I fain would say: I love thee!

DON SANCHO.

Then draw nigh.
[*She approaches him.*
Quite close.
[*She draws near to him. Both sink down on the bench,* DONNA ROSE *in the arms of* DON SANCHO.

DONNA ROSE (*gazing on him with absorbing earnestness*).

Don Sancho! O my King! How fair
And radiant is thy face!

DON SANCHO.

We shall belong,
My Rose, to one another and forever!
How true it is, dear Rose! God comes whene'er
We pray to him. Dost thou discern the sense
Those heavenly words "wife, husband," bear? — Grace,
beauty,
And purity, thy sacred body and
Thy hallowed flesh — Oh, the hot sleepless nights,
The dreams within the cloister! — Oh, to be
The spouse! to seize the bashful, shrinking angel!
To see thee every moment, speak with thee
By night or day the words that tell our bliss,
And hear thee say them to me, tremulous,
And kiss them on thy smiling lips! and then —
Oh, do not blush! — my Rose, to see some day
Thy lovely charming bosom pressed between
The little adorable hands of a sweet babe,
Who is thy master while I am thy lover!
To hear him stammer with his honeyed lips:
"Mother!"

DONNA ROSE (*with an expression of adoration*).

And "Father!"—O my love!

[*During their ecstasy the top of a black banner appears behind the staircase. The banner mounts the staircase slowly. Then it is seen entire. It bears in the centre a death's head and two bones forming a cross, white on a black ground.* DON SANCHO *and* DONNA ROSE *turn round, and are struck dumb with terror. The banner continues to mount. Finally the cowl of the banner-bearer is perceived, and, on the right and left, the cowls of two files of white and black penitents appear.*

SANCHO.

O God!

THE END.

ESMERALDA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Esmeralda.
Phœbus de Chateaupers.
Claude Frollo.
Quasimodo.
Fleur-de-lys.
Madame Aloise de Gondelaurier.
Diana.
Berangère.
Viscount de Gif.
M. de Chevreuse.
M. de Morlaix.
Clopin Frouillefou.
The Town-crier.

Populace, Vagrants, Archers, etc.

ESMERALDA.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *The Court of Miracles. It is night. A crowd of vagrants. Noisy dancing. Male and female beggars in different attitudes of their profession. The King of Thune on his cask. Fires, lights, torches. In the shadow a circle of wretched dwellings.*

SCENE I.

CLAUDE FROLLO, CLOPIN FROUILLEFOU, *then* ESMERALDA, *then* QUASIMODO. THE VAGRANTS.

CHORUS OF VAGRANTS.

Long live Clopin! Long live the King of Thune!
Long live the rogues of Paris.
Let us strike our blows at dusk, —
The hour when all the cats are drunk.
Let us dance! Defy Pope and bull,
And let us laugh in our skins,
Whether April wets or June burns
The feathers in our caps.
Let us smell from afar
The shot of the avenging archer,
Or the bag of money which passes
On the back of the traveller.
In the light of the moon,
We will go dance with the spirits.
Long live Clopin, King of Thune!
Long live the rogues of Paris!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*apart behind a pillar in a corner of the stage. He is covered with a long cloak which hides his priestly garb*).

In the midst of this infamous band
What matters the sigh of a soul?
I suffer! Oh, never did fiercer flame
Burn in the bowels of a volcano.

[ESMERALDA *enters, dancing.*

CHORUS.

There she is! There she is! It is she — Esmeralda!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside*).

It is she! oh, yes — 't is she!
Wherefore, relentless fate,
Made you her so beautiful,
Me — so unfortunate?

[*She reaches the centre of the stage.* THE VAGRANTS *form an admiring circle around her.*

ESMERALDA.

An orphan am I,
Child of woe,
To you I turn
And flowers throw!
In my wild joy
Sad sighs abide;
I show a smile,
The tears I hide.

Poor girl, — I dance
Where brooklets run,
As chirp the birds
My song flows on:

I am the dove
  Which, hurt, must fall;
Over my cradle
  Hangs death's pall.

CHORUS.

Young girl, dance on!
  More gentle you make us.
Take us for family,
  And play with us,
As stoops the nightingale
  Unto the sea,
Teasing its waves
  To ecstasy.

'T is the young girl, —
  Child of woe,
When beams her eye
  Grief must go.
She 's like the bee
  Which trembling flies
To the flower's heart,
  Its Paradise.

Young girl, dance on!
  More gentle you make us.
Take us for family,
  And play with us!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside*).

Tremble, young girl, —
The priest is jealous.

[CLAUDE *attempts to draw near to* ESMERALDA; *she turns away from him with a kind of horror. The procession of the Pope of Fools enters. Torches, lanterns,*

and music. In the middle of the procession, upon a litter surrounded with candles, QUASIMODO, *decked with cope and mitre, is carried.*

CHORUS.

Salute him, clerks of Vasoche!
Shell-heaps, lubbers, beggars!
Salute him, all of you! He comes.
Behold the Pope of Fools!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*perceiving* QUASIMODO, *and starting toward him with a gesture of anger*).

Quasimodo! What a strange part to play!
Profanation! Here — Quasimodo!

QUASIMODO.

Great God! what do I hear?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Come here, I tell you.

QUASIMODO (*jumping from the litter*).

Here I am!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Be anathematized!

QUASIMODO.

God! it is himself!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Outrageous audacity!

QUASIMODO.

Moment of terror.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

To your knees, traitor!

QUASIMODO.

Pardon me, Master!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

No! I am a priest.

[CLAUDE FROLLO *tears off* QUASIMODO'S *pontifical ornaments, and crushes them underfoot.* THE VAGRANTS *begin to murmur; they form menacing groups around him; he looks at them angrily.*

THE VAGRANTS.

He threatens us,
O comrades!
Here in this place,
Where we reign.

QUASIMODO.

What means the audacity
Of these robbers?
They menace him,
But we shall see!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Race unclean,
You menace me.
Robbers — Jews —
But we shall see!

[*The anger of* THE VAGRANTS *bursts forth.*

THE VAGRANTS.

Stop! stop! stop!
Down with the mar-joy!
He shall pay for it with his head;
In vain he defends himself.

QUASIMODO.

Have respect for his head.
Let every one cease,

Or I change this festival
To a bloody battle.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

It is not about his head
That Frollo is troubled. [*Puts his hand on his heart.*
There is the tempest,
There is the battle!

[*At the moment when* THE VAGRANTS' *fury has reached its highest pitch,* CLOPIN FROUILLEFOU *appears at the back of the stage.*

CLOPIN.

Who in this infamous den
Dares to attack my lord the Archdeacon,
And Quasimodo, bell-ringer
Of Notre Dame?

THE VAGRANTS (*subsiding*).

It is Clopin, our King!

CLOPIN.

Clowns! Be off!

THE VAGRANTS.

We must obey!

CLOPIN.

Leave us!

[THE VAGRANTS *retire to their hovels. The Court of Miracles appears deserted.* CLOPIN *approaches* CLAUDE *cautiously.*

SCENE II.

CLAUDE FROLLO, QUASIMODO, CLOPIN FROUILLEFOU.

CLOPIN.

What purpose brings you to this orgy?
Has your lordship any orders to give me?
You are my master in sorcery;
Speak, — I will do all.

CLAUDE FROLLO (*grasping* CLOPIN'S *arm excitedly, and dragging him to the front of the stage*).

I have come to end all.
Listen!

CLOPIN.

My lord!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

I love her more than ever.
You behold me quivering with love and with anguish.
I must have her to-night.

CLOPIN.

You will see her pass by here, — in a moment;
It is the way to her home.

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside*).

Oh! Hell has hold of me!
[*Aloud.*] Soon — you say?

CLOPIN.

Upon the instant!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Alone?

CLOPIN.

Alone.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

That is enough.

CLOPIN.

Will you wait?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

I wait, —
Let me have her, or let me die!

CLOPIN.

Can I help you?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

No!

[*He motions to* CLOPIN *to leave him, after having thrown him his purse. When he finds himself alone with* QUASIMODO, *he draws him to the front of the stage.*

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Come! I need you!

QUASIMODO.

It is well!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

For a deed that is impious, frightful, awful!

QUASIMODO.

You are my lord and master!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Chains, death, the law, —
We brave them all.

QUASIMODO.

Count upon me.

CLAUDE FROLLO (*recklessly*).

I mean to abduct the gypsy!

QUASIMODO.

Master, take my blood — without telling me why!

[*Upon a sign from* CLAUDE FROLLO *he retires up stage and leaves his master down stage.*

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Oh, Heaven! to have given one's mind to the depths,
To have tried all the crimes of sorcery,
To have fallen lower than hell itself:
A priest, at midnight, in the dark to watch for a woman!
And to reflect that in this state in which I find my soul
God sees me!
Well! what does it matter?
Fate drags me on!
Its hand is too strong,
Its will be done!
I begin life over, —
The priest insane
Feels hope no longer,
Knows terror is vain!
Demon, who drugs me,
Give her to me;
And I, who evoked thee,
Thy slave will be, —
Receive the priest
Whose bonds are riven!
Hell with her
Will be my heaven!

Come, exquisite woman,
Your beauty I claim.
You shall own me forever, —
I swear, in God's name!
Since he — since the master
By whom love was given,
Bids me choose, — me, a priest,
Between passion and heaven!

QUASIMODO (*returning*).

Master, the moment is at hand!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Yes — the solemn hour:
It will decide my fate. Be silent! Hush!

CLAUDE FROLLO *and* QUASIMODO.

The night is dark,
Footsteps I hear:
In shadow does not
Some one draw near?
[*They go to the back of the stage to listen.*

THE WATCH (*passing behind the houses*).

Vigilance and peace!
Whoever passes here
Must ope the eye to darkness,
To silence strain the ear.

CLAUDE FROLLO *and* QUASIMODO.

In shadow they come;
They make no sound:
Still let us be
While the watch goes round!
[*The voices of the watch grow fainter.*

QUASIMODO.

The watch has passed!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Our terror follows it.

[CLAUDE FROLLO *and* QUASIMODO *look anxiously at the door through which* ESMERALDA *must pass.*

QUASIMODO.

Love inspires,
Hope renders strong,
Him who watches
While sleeps the throng.
I see her come, —
Lo! she appears.
Maid divine!
Have no fears!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Love inspires,
Hope renders strong,
Him who watches
While sleeps the throng.
I see her come,
Maid divine!
Lo! she appears, —
She is mine!

[ESMERALDA *enters: they throw themselves upon her and try to drag her away: she struggles.*

ESMERALDA.

Help, — help! To me, — help!

CLAUDE FROLLO *and* QUASIMODO.

Hush, young maiden, — hush!

SCENE III.

ESMERALDA, QUASIMODO, PHŒBUS DE CHATEAUPERS, *the archers of the watch.*

PHŒBUS (*entering at the head of a body of archers*).

In the King's name!

[*In the struggle* CLAUDE *escapes. The archers seize* QUASIMODO.

PHŒBUS.

Arrest him! hold him close!
Be he lord or valet!
At once — we will conduct him
To the prison Chatelet.

[*The archers take* QUASIMODO *up stage and off.* ESMERALDA, *recovered from her fright, approaches* PHŒBUS *with curiosity, mingled with admiration, and draws him gently to the front of the stage.*

ESMERALDA (*to* PHŒBUS).

Deign to tell me
Your name, sir!
I beg you to.

PHŒBUS.

Phœbus, my child, —
Of the family
Of Chateaupers.

ESMERALDA.

Captain?

PHŒBUS.

Yes, my queen!

ESMERALDA.

Queen? oh, no!

PHŒBUS.

Exquisite grace!

ESMERALDA.

Phœbus! I like your name!

PHŒBUS.

Upon my soul
I have a blade
Which has, Madame,
Great havoc made.

ESMERALDA (*to* PHŒBUS).

A beautiful captain,
An officer grand,
With corselet of steel
And an air of command!
Often, kind sir,
Our hearts they break,
And only laugh
At the tears they make.

PHŒBUS (*aside*).

With a beautiful captain,
An officer gay,
Love hardly succeeds
In living a day.
All soldiers desire
To pluck every rose,
Joys without troubles,
Love without woes.

PHŒBUS (*to* ESMERALDA).

A radiant spirit
Smiles at me
Through thine eyes.

ESMERALDA.

A beautiful captain,
An officer grand,
With corselet of steel
And an air of command!
Long watches the girl
He carelessly passed;
And the dreams he awakened
Forever may last!

PHŒBUS.

With a beautiful captain,
An officer gay,
Love hardly succeeds
In living a day!
It's like lightning which flashes, —
This eager desire
Which the eyes of sweet maidens
Kindle to fire!

ESMERALDA (*standing before the* CAPTAIN *and admiring him*).

My lord Phœbus! Let me see you!
Let me admire you a hundred fold!
Oh the beautiful scarf of silk, —
Oh the fine scarf with fringe of gold!

[PHŒBUS *takes it off and offers it to her.*

PHŒBUS.

Does it please you?

ESMERALDA (*taking the scarf and putting it on*).

Yes, it is beautiful!

PHŒBUS.

One moment! [*He goes to her and tries to embrace her.*

ESMERALDA (*drawing back*).

Don't, I beg you!

PHŒBUS (*insisting*).

You must kiss me!

ESMERALDA (*drawing away still more*).

No, truly!

PHŒBUS (*laughing*).

A beauty
So cruel,
So haughty,
Is charming.

ESMERALDA.

No, beautiful captain,
In vain you plead!
Can I tell how far
A kiss might lead?

PHŒBUS.

I am a captain,
Why abuse me?
I want a kiss, —
Don't refuse me!
Give it me, — give it, or I will take!

ESMERALDA.

No, leave me! I beg of you, for my sake.

PHŒBUS.

One kiss, one kiss, — 't is nothing, you see.

ESMERALDA.

Nothing to you, but much to me!

PHŒBUS.

Look at me, dear! I am playing no part!

ESMERALDA.

Alas, but I cannot look into my heart!

PHŒBUS.

To-night love shall make an entrance there!

ESMERALDA.

Wherever love enters, soon follows despair.

[*She slips out of his arms and escapes.* PHŒBUS, *disappointed, turns to* QUASIMODO, *whom the archers hold bound at the back of the stage.*

PHŒBUS.

She escapes me, she resists me!
A gay adventure, verily!
I keep the worst of our two birds of prey, —
The owl remains; the nightingale flew away!

[*He places himself at the head of his guard and goes out, taking* QUASIMODO *with him.*

CHORUS OF THE WATCH.

Vigilance and peace, —
Whoever passes here
Must ope the eye to darkness,
To silence strain the ear!

[*The sound grows fainter and finally ceases.*

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The square of Grève. The pillory.* QUASIMODO *is in the pillory. Populace on the square.*

SCENE I.

CHORUS.

He abducted a girl, —
What! is it possible?
Hark! how they abuse him!
Do you hear, my friends?
Quasimodo has been hunting on Cupid's domain!

A WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE.

He will pass through my street
On his return from the pillory;
And it is Pierrat Forterne
Who will give us the signal.

TOWN-CRIER.

In the King's name, whom God protect!
The man you see here, will be put
Under a strong guard,
In the pillory for one hour.

CHORUS.

Down with him! Down with him!
The hunchback, the deaf, the one-eyed creature
This Barabbas!
I believe, s'death! he 's looking at us.
Down with the sorcerer!
He makes faces, he kicks;

He makes dogs bark in the streets.
Punish the rascal well!
Double the whip and the penalty.

QUASIMODO.

Drink!

CHORUS.

Hang him!

QUASIMODO.

Drink!

CHORUS.

Be accursed!

[ESMERALDA, *some instants ago, joined the crowd. She perceives* QUASIMODO, *first with surprise, then with pity. Suddenly, in the midst of all the noise, she mounts the pillory, unfastens a little cup which she carries on her belt, and gives a drink to* QUASIMODO.

CHORUS.

What are you doing, beautiful girl?
Leave Quasimodo alone!
When Beelzebub roasts,
Nobody gives him water.

[*She comes down. The archers unfasten* QUASIMODO *and take him away.*

CHORUS.

He abducted a woman!
Who? This dolt!
It is terrible, it is infamous,
It is too much!
Do you hear, my friends?
Quasimodo
Dared to go hunting on Cupid's domain.

SCENE II.

A magnificent drawing-room in which people are making preparations for a festival. PHŒBUS, FLEUR-DE-LYS, MADAME ALOISE DE GONDELAURIER.

MADAME ALOISE.

Phœbus, my future son-in-law, listen to me. I am fond of you.
Be master here, as if you were another self.
Look to it that every one is gay to-night.
And you, my daughter, come, get ready.
You will be the most beautiful at this festival,
Be also the most happy.
[*She goes up stage and gives orders to the servants, who continue the preparations.*

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

Sir, since the other week,
We have hardly seen you twice!
This festival brings you back.
How fortunate for us!

PHŒBUS.

Don't scold, I beg of you!

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

I understand. Phœbus forgets me!

PHŒBUS.

I swear to you —

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

Don't swear!
They only swear who deceive.

PHŒBUS.

Forget you? What folly!
Are you not the most fair?
Am I not the most loving?

PHŒBUS (*aside*).

My beautiful betrothed
Is out of sorts to-day;
Suspicion is in her mind.
What a pity!
Beauties, the lovers you treat ill
Go elsewhere.
You can do more with pleasure
Than with tears.

FLEUR-DE-LYS (*aside*).

To betray me, his betrothed,
Who belong to him!
I, who have only him to think of
And worry about!
Ah! whether he is away or here,
What grief!
Present, he scorns my joy;
Absent, my tears.

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

Phœbus, the scarf that I worked for you, —
What have you done with it? I don't see it.

PHŒBUS (*troubled*).

The scarf? I don't know!
[*Aside.*] Good God! unlucky chance!

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

You forgot it?
[*Aside.*] To whom has he given it?
And for whom am I deserted?

MADAME ALOISE (*coming up to them and trying to reconcile them*).

Heavens! get married! Then you can quarrel.

PHŒBUS (*to* FLEUR-DE-LYS).

No! I have not forgotten it.
I remember, I carefully folded it
And put it in an enamelled box
That I had made for it.
[*Passionately to* FLEUR-DE-LYS, *who still frets.*
I swear I love you better
Than one could love Venus herself!

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

Don't swear! Don't swear!
They only swear who deceive!

MADAME ALOISE.

Children, don't quarrel, — everything is bright to-day!
Come, my daughter, you must be seen!
The guests are coming! Everything has its turn.
[*To the servants.*] Light the candles and let the ball begin.
I want everything to be beautiful, to seem as bright as day.

PHŒBUS.

Since we have Fleur-de-lys, nothing is wanting to the ball.

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

Yes, Phœbus, — love is wanting! [*They go out.*

PHŒBUS (*watching* FLEUR-DE-LYS *go out*).

She speaks the truth: my heart is sad
Even when she is near —
The one I love, the one who fills my soul, —
Alas! she is not here.

Exquisite creature,
To you my love!
Oh, dancing shadow,
My sweet-voiced dove,
Absent, yet with me
Wherever I move!

She 's as bewildering and sweet
As is a nest mid rushes,
Sweet as a rosebud crowned with moss,
Sweet as the joy which sorrow hushes.

Humble child and virgin proud,
Soul that 's pure though free!
Voluptuous ardours sink abashed
Before thy chastity.

In the dark night she comes,
An angel from the skies;
Her forehead veiled by shadows,
Flames darting from her eyes.

I see her face forever, —
Now bright, now dark it seems;
But strangely — 't is in heaven
I see her in these dreams.

Exquisite creature,
To you my love!
Oh, dancing shadow,
My sweet-voiced dove,
Absent, yet with me
Wherever I move!

[*Enter several lords and ladies in gala dress.*

SCENE III.

The preceding. VISCOUNT DE GIF, M. DE MORLAIX, M. DE CHEVREUSE, MADAME DE GONDELAURIER, FLEUR-DE-LYS, DIANA, BÉRANGÈRE. *Ladies, Lords.*

VISCOUNT DE GIF.

My salutations, noble hostesses!

MADAME ALOISE, PHŒBUS, FLEUR-DE-LYS (*bowing*).

Good evening, noble viscount!
Forget all care and grief
Beneath this hospitable roof.

M. DE MORLAIX.

Ladies, may God send you
Health, pleasure, and happiness!

MADAME ALOISE, PHŒBUS, FLEUR-DE-LYS.

May Heaven return with interest
All your good wishes, my lord!

M. DE CHEVREUSE.

Ladies, from the bottom of my soul
I belong to you, as I do to God!

MADAME ALOISE, PHŒBUS, FLEUR-DE-LYS.

Kind sir, may our good Lady
Come always to your aid!

[*All the guests enter.*

CHORUS.

Come to the festival, come!
Page, lordship, and ladyship, come!

With flowers in your hand,
A joy-seeking band,
Come to the festival, come!

[*The guests greet and salute each other; servants circulate among the crowd, bearing platters laden with flowers and fruits. A group of young girls forms itself near a window to the left. Suddenly one of them calls to the others, and motions to them to look out of the window.*

DIANA (*looking out*).

Come and look! come and look, Bérangère!

BÉRANGÈRE (*looking into the street*).

Is n't she quick? Is n't she light?

DIANA.

It is a fairy or it is love.

VISCOUNT DE GIF (*laughing*).

Who dances in the public square?

M. DE CHEVREUSE (*after having looked*).

Indeed! it is the magician.
Phœbus, it is your gypsy
Whom, the other night, with valor
You saved from a robber.

VISCOUNT DE GIF.

Oh, yes. it is the gypsy.

M. DE MORLAIX.

She 's as beautiful as the day.

DIANA (*to* PHŒBUS).

If you know her, tell her to come
And dance for us.

PHŒBUS (*looking out with an absent air*).

It might be she!
[*To* M. DE GIF.] Do you think she would remember?

FLEUR-DE-LYS (*who watches and listens*).

Every one remembers you.
Come, call her, tell her to come up.
[*Aside.*] I will see whether to believe what I am told.

PHŒBUS (*to* FLEUR-DE-LYS).

You wish it? Well, let us try!
[*He motions to the dancer to come up.*

THE YOUNG GIRLS.

She is coming!

M. DE CHEVREUSE.

She has disappeared under the porch.

DIANA.

She has left the mob, stupefied.

VISCOUNT DE GIF.

Ladies, you will see the nymph of the streets.

FLEUR-DE-LYS (*aside*).

How quickly she obeyed that sign from Phœbus!

SCENE IV.

The same. ESMERALDA. *The gypsy enters timidly, confused and radiant. Movement of admiration. The crowd falls back before her.*

CHORUS.

Look! her brow is fair amid the fairest,
As a star would shine, surrounded by torches.

PHŒBUS.

Oh, creature divine!
Admiration is duty.
Of this ball she is queen,
Her crown is her beauty.
[*He turns to* MESSIEURS DE GIF *and* DE CHEVREUSE.
Friends, my soul is on fire.
War and death would I face,
To hold in my arms
Such bewildering grace.

M. DE CHEVREUSE.

She is a heavenly vision,
A dream most rare and tender,
Which, floating through earth's darkness,
Radiates celestial splendor.
Born in the public streets, —
Oh, blind caprice of fate,
To trail through muddy streams
A flower so immaculate!

ESMERALDA (*fixing her eyes on* PHŒBUS *in the crowd*).

It is my Phœbus, I was sure,
Just as that night I found him;

Whether in satin or in steel,
How grace and strength surround him!
Phœbus, — my head is all on fire,
All burns within me, joy and pain;
My soul 's consumed for lack of tears,
Just as earth yearns for rain.

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

How fair she is, — yes, I was sure!
Jealous, indeed, I ought to be;
But yet to match that loveliness
How great must be my jealousy!
Alas! perhaps we both, foredoomed
To waste 'neath sorrow's harsh caress,
Full soon shall die, — she in her flower,
I in my loneliness!

MADAME ALOISE.

A radiant creature, truly,
But, faith, 't is a disgrace
That such a wretched gypsy
Should have so sweet a face.
Alas! the curious laws of fate
'T is not for mortal mind to know:
The serpent hides his treacherous head
Beneath the fairest flowers that grow.

ALL (*together*).

She has the calmness, the delight
Of radiant skies on a warm night.

MADAME ALOISE (*to* ESMERALDA).

Come, child! My beauty, come, —
Come and dance us some new dance!
[ESMERALDA *prepares to dance, and draws from her bosom the scarf which* PHŒBUS *gave her.*

FLEUR-DE-LYS.

My scarf! Phœbus, you have deceived me!
My rival! Here she is!

[FLEUR-DE-LYS *snatches the scarf from* ESMERALDA, *and falls in a swoon. All the people rush angrily toward the gypsy, who flies for protection to* PHŒBUS.

ALL.

Is it true that Phœbus loves her?
Infamous creature, go — depart!
To brave us thus in our own home,
You must have an audacious heart.
Oh! height of insolence! Retire!
Go back into the public street!
The common tradesmen, they can praise
The jumping of your low-born feet.
Away with her, away at once!
Out at the door! 'T is a disgrace
For this degraded girl to lift
Her eyes to such a lofty place.

ESMERALDA.

Oh, defend me! Help! Defend me,
Save me, Phœbus, I implore thee;
For the poor forsaken gypsy,
Stands defenceless now before thee!

PHŒBUS.

I love her, and I love but her.
Yes! her defender I will be.
I 'll fight for her, and my strong arm
Will bear my heart out valiantly.
If some one must be her protector,
I am the one, — and doubt me not,
Her wrongs are mine, and who insults her
Must answer for it on the spot.

ALL.

What! She is what he loves! Indeed!
Away from here, away from here!
A gypsy he prefers to us;
With loving words he calms her fear.
Hush! silence! Both of you be still!
No further words of insolence.

[*To* PHŒBUS.] From you, 't is too much arrogance!

[*To* ESMERALDA.] From thee, too much impertinence!

[PHŒBUS *and his friends protect the gypsy, who is menaced by all the guests of* MADAME DE GONDELAURIER. ESMERALDA *staggers toward the door.*

ACT III.

SCENE. — *The front yard of a tavern. Tavern to the right; trees to the left. In the back a door, and a small low wall which closes in the yard. In the distance the roof of Notre Dame with its towers and its spire. A dark silhouette of old Paris outlines itself against the red sunset. The river Seine is at the base of the picture.*

SCENE I.

PHŒBUS, VISCOUNT DE GIF, M. DE MORLAIX, M. DE CHEVREUSE, *and many other friends of* PHŒBUS, *seated at tables, are drinking, and singing; afterward* DON CLAUDE FROLLO.

CHORUS.

Be propitious and well-inclined,
  Our Lady of Saint Lo,
To him who only water hates
  Of all things here below!

PHŒBUS.

Give to the brave
  In every place
A well-filled cellar,
  A pretty face.
Happy fellow!
  Help him hold
Dainty women,
  Wine that's old.

If a beauty
  Of cold mien
Be unwilling,
  'T is sometimes seen,

He jokes with her
With merry winks,
Then he sings,
Then he drinks!

The day goes by.
Or drunk or not,
He soon embraces
His Toinotte;
Then ferocious
He goes to bed
In a cannon's mouth,
And sleeps like lead!

And his soul,
Which often seems
To mix up women
With his dreams,
Is contented if the wind,
With its come and go,
Rocks the canvas of his tent
Gently to and fro!

CHORUS.

Be propitious and well inclined,
Our Lady of Saint Lo!
To him who only water hates
Of all things here below.

[*Enter* CLAUDE FROLLO, *who seats himself at a table at some distance from* PHŒBUS, *and appears at first to observe nothing that passes around him.*

VISCOUNT DE GIF (*to* PHŒBUS).

That pretty gypsy,
What are you doing with her?

[CLAUDE FROLLO *makes a movement of attention.*

PHŒBUS.

To-night, in an hour,
I have a meeting with her.

ALL.

Truly?

PHŒBUS.

Truly!

[*The agitation of* CLAUDE FROLLO *increases.*

VISCOUNT DE GIF.

In one hour?

PHŒBUS.

In one moment!
Oh, love! supremest rapture!
To feel one heart holds two!
To own the woman that one loves, —
Be slave and conqueror too!
To have her soul; to have her charms,
Her song which fills with bliss;
To see her sweet eyes wet with tears,
To dry them with a kiss.

[*While he sings, the others drink and strike their glasses.*

CHORUS.

'T is a rapture supreme,
Whatever one thinks,
To drink to one's love,
And to love what one drinks!

PHŒBUS.

Friends, the prettiest of all,
A grace divine,
Oh, wonder, ecstasy!
Friends, she is mine!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside*).

I bind myself to hell;
Misfortune on you dwell!

PHŒBUS.

Pleasure awaits us;
  Exhaust without remorse
The better part of life,
  Love's precious intercourse!
What matter if one dies,
  When joy has passed away,
I 'd give a century for an hour,
  Eternity for a day.

[*The curfew rings; the friends of* PHŒBUS *arise from the table, replace their swords, their caps, their cloaks, and prepare to depart.*

CHORUS.

Phœbus, the hour is come;
  It is the curfew-bell:
Hurry to your beloved;
  God's blessing on you dwell!

PHŒBUS.

At last the hour is come;
  It is the curfew-bell.
I go to my beloved;
  God's blessing on her dwell!

[*The friends of* PHŒBUS *go out.*

SCENE II.

CLAUDE FROLLO, PHŒBUS. CLAUDE FROLLO *stops* PHŒBUS *as he is about to go out.*

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Captain!

PHŒBUS.

Who is this man?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Listen to me!

PHŒBUS.

Make haste!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Do you know the name of the one
Who awaits you at the meeting to-night?

PHŒBUS.

By my life, it is my beauty!
The one I love and who loves me.
My song-bird, my dancing gypsy,
My Esmeralda, it is she!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

It is death!

PHŒBUS.

Friend! First, you are an idiot;
Second, go to the devil!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Listen!

PHŒBUS.

What do I care?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Phœbus, if you cross the threshold of that door —

PHŒBUS.

You are mad!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

You are dead!
Tremble! One of the gypsies she!
No law protects those awful places.
There love's a masquerade for hate,
Death lies concealed in their embraces.

PHŒBUS (*laughing*).

My dear sir, readjust your cape,
Return unto your fools' retreat!
Strange they allow you to escape!
May Esculapius, Jupiter, the Devil,
Thither conduct your straying feet!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Truly they are faithless women;
Believe that the report speaks true.
Darkness strange and deep surrounds them;
Phœbus! there death waits for you!

[CLAUDE FROLLO'S *earnestness seems to trouble* PHŒBUS, *who looks at his interrogator with anxiety.*

PHŒBUS.

He astounds me!
Ah, he wounds me
In spite of myself, with doubt!
This city great
Is full of hate,
And treachery is all about!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

I astound him,
And I wound him,
In spite of himself, with doubt.
The fool, he fears,
And sees and hears
Nothing but treachery about.

Believe me, — my lord, avoid the siren
Who lures you to destruction.
More than one gypsy in her rage
Has stabbed a heart palpitating with love.

[PHŒBUS, *whom he tries to drag along, recovers himself and pushes him off.*

PHŒBUS.

Have I become a fool?
Gypsy, Jewess, or Moor,
The love that questions what she be
Is love most base and poor.
The fateful hour is come,
Unto my love I fly!
If death be but as sweet as she,
It will be fine to die!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*holding him*).

Consider! A gypsy!
Your folly is great.
How dare you thus rashly
Trifle with fate!
Oh, dread the false creature
Who waits in the gloom,
And do not thus wildly
Rush to your doom.

[PHŒBUS *exits quickly, in spite of* CLAUDE FROLLO. CLAUDE FROLLO *stands gloomy and undecided for a moment; then follows* PHŒBUS.

SCENE III.

A chamber. In the background, a window which opens on the river. CLOPIN FROUILLEFOU *enters, bearing a torch. He is followed by several men, to whom he makes a preconcerted sign, and places them in a dark corner, in which they disappear; then he returns to the door and signals to some one to come up.* DON CLAUDE *appears.*

CLOPIN (*to* CLAUDE).

From here you can see the captain
And the gypsy without being seen.
[*He shows him an alcove behind some tapestry.*

CLAUDE FROLLO.

The men are stationed and ready?

CLOPIN.

They are ready.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

The projector of this must never be known.
Silence! take this purse.
I will give you as much more afterwards.
[CLAUDE FROLLO *hides himself in the alcove.* CLOPIN *exits with caution.* ESMERALDA *and* PHŒBUS *enter.*

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside*).

Oh, woman adored,
Destiny's prey!
She enters in beauty,
In tears goes away.

ESMERALDA (*to* PHŒBUS).

My lord the count,
My feelings I try to hide.
My heart is filled with shame,
And filled also with pride.

PHŒBUS (*to* ESMERALDA).

My beauty, white and red,
I beg you blush no more.
Love, entering love's domain,
Leaves fear outside the door.

[PHŒBUS *makes* ESMERALDA *sit down on the bench beside him.*

PHŒBUS.

Dost thou love me?

ESMERALDA.

I love thee!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside*).

What torture!

PHŒBUS.

The adorable creature!
Upon my soul, you are divine!

ESMERALDA.

Your lips are flatterers;
You make me feel ashamed.
I beg of you, don't come so near.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

They love each other. How I envy them!

ESMERALDA.

My Phœbus! I owe my life to you.

PHŒBUS.

And I — I owe my happiness to you.

ESMERALDA.

Be good to me!
Oh, try to be
Gentle, I entreat,
To the young maid,
Who much afraid
Trembles at your feet!

PHŒBUS.

Oh, my white queen,
Goddess serene,
Sovereign of beauty,
Whose bright eyes shine
With fires divine
Of passion and of duty!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

I wait for them;
I hark to them.
How tender she,
How handsome he!
How near their doom!
Be joyous he,
And happy she,
While I prepare their tomb!

PHŒBUS.

Nymph or woman,
Saint or human,
Be my wife to me!
All day I yearn,
All night I burn,
Such is my love for thee!

ESMERALDA.

I am woman,
I am human,
And my soul afire,
Trembles ever,
Longs forever,
As throbs a lover's lyre!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Woman, wait!
My flame as great,
My blade must have its turn.
Oh! I admire
These souls afire,
And these hearts which burn!

PHŒBUS.

Be always white and red, my love,
And smile at our bright lot;
Smile sweet at love, which we 've awaked,
And chastity, which we 've forgot.
Your mouth is heaven, — my heaven, love, —
My soul would cling in bliss
Upon it, love, and pray that life
Might end with one long kiss.

ESMERALDA.

Your voice delights my ear, love;
Your smile is sweet and free.
The laughing passion in your eyes
Benumbs and conquers me.
Your wishes are my law, love,
But I can't yield to this:
My virtue and my happiness
Might die in that long kiss!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Don't let them hear your step, Death,
As near to them you creep!
My jealous hatred will keep watch
While their love-falls asleep.
From out their arms so closely locked
You'll steal away their bliss!
Phœbus — your wish is granted,
You die for that long kiss!

[CLAUDE FROLLO *rushes upon* PHŒBUS *and stabs him; then he opens the window in the back, through which he escapes. With a great cry,* ESMERALDA *falls upon the body of* PHŒBUS. *The men stationed at the corner rush forward, seize her, and seem to accuse her.*

ACT IV.

SCENE. — *A prison. Door in the centre.*

SCENE I.

ESMERALDA (*alone, chained, lying upon a bed of straw*).

What! He in the tomb and I in this cell, —
He a victim and I a prisoner!
I saw him fall! In truth, he 's dead!
And this crime, this awful crime, —
They say it is my work!
The stem of our life, while yet green, is broken.
Phœbus has gone, and he shows me the way.
Yesterday they made his grave,
To-morrow they 'll make mine!

ROMANCE.

Phœbus, is there nothing left,
No help given, to those bereft
In this cruel wise, —
Neither filters, love, nor charms,
To assuage the soul's alarms,
Or reopen closèd eyes?

God in heaven, I adore thee!
Every hour I implore thee!
Deign to end my life to-day
Or to take my love away!

Phœbus, let us turn our wings
Toward the lights supernal,
Where all things must go at last,

Where love bides and is eternal.
On earth our bodies sleep together,
In heaven our souls will live forever!

God in heaven, I adore thee!
Every hour I implore thee!
Deign to end my life to-day
Or to take my love away!

[*The door opens.* CLAUDE FROLLO *enters, a lamp in his hand, his hood pulled over his face: he comes and stands, motionless, in front of* ESMERALDA.

ESMERALDA (*jumping up with terror*).

Who is this man?

CLAUDE FROLLO (*covered by his hood*).

A priest!

ESMERALDA.

A priest! How mysterious!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Are you ready?

ESMERALDA.

Ready for what?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Ready to die.

ESMERALDA.

Yes.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

It is well.

ESMERALDA.

Will it be soon? Answer me, father!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Do you suffer so much?

ESMERALDA.

Yes, I suffer.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Perhaps I, who shall live to-morrow,
Suffer more than you.

ESMERALDA.

You? Who, then, are you?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

The tomb lies between us!

ESMERALDA.

Your name?

CLAUDE FROLLO.

You wish to know it?

ESMERALDA.

Yes. [*He lifts his hood.*

The priest!

It is the priest! O God! my feeble strength inspire!
It is indeed his brow of ice, it is his glance of fire!
'T is he who has pursued me, remorseless, day and night;
'T was he who killed my Phœbus, and slew my heart's delight.
Monster, from my prison, with death's cold hand on me,
I 'll curse thee, till within the grave my lips shall silent be!
What have I done to thee? What is thine awful plan?
What dost thou want with me, relentless, impious man?
You hate me!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

I love you!
I love you, — it is infamous!
Oh, shame to my priesthood!
This love, it is my soul;
This love, it is my blood!

At your feet I fall;
Hear my heart, which cries,
I prefer your tomb
Unto Paradise.
Pity me. I love you! Your pity I implore!
For you I've sinned. Have mercy, do not curse me more!

ESMERALDA.

He loves me! Oh, crown of horrors!
He holds me, — this horrible sorcerer!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

The only living thing in me
Is my love and my anguish!
Hopeless anguish,
Wretched plight!
Alas! I love her
Painful night!

ESMERALDA.

Awful moment,
Cruel fright!
Heaven! He loves me,
Fearful night!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside*).

She shudders, quivers in my arms;
The priest has won his chance at last!
By night I bore her, once, away;
Now, in the day, I'll hold her fast!
Death, which follows in my train,
Will give her back to love again!

ESMERALDA.

Pity, — pity, let me go!
Phœbus is dead; he waits above.

Alas! I tremble, I 'm afraid,
I shiver at your frightful love,
E'en as the bird which, tortured, dies
Beneath the vulture's cruel eyes!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Accept me, I love you! Refuse me no more!
Have pity for me, for yourself, I implore!

ESMERALDA.

Your prayer is an insult.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Would you rather die?

ESMERALDA.

The body dies, — the soul lives!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

To die is terrible!

ESMERALDA.

Hush! your impious words!
Your love makes death beautiful!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Choose! choose! Or Claude or death!

[CLAUDE *falls at* ESMERALDA'S *feet in supplication. She repels him.*

ESMERALDA.

No, murderer, I will not! Hush!
A crime is this foul love you 've nursed.
Better the tomb to which I fly, —
Be cursed amid the most accursed!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Tremble, for the scaffold claims you!
You know not what awful schemes
This breast of fury has engendered;
And hell abets me in my dreams.
How I love thee!
Thy hand give,
And to-morrow
Thou shalt live!
Night benumbed
With terror's breath!
Tears for me,
For thee death!
Say, "I love thee!"
Cease thy scorning;
Thy last day
Is dawning!
Ah! since in vain I supplicate,
In vain thy hate I fight,
Farewell forever! One day more,
Then comes eternal night.

ESMERALDA.

Inhuman priest,
Go! I abhor thee!
His dear blood yet
Seems dripping o'er thee!
Oh, night of horror,
Night of shame!
Enough of tears;
Death I claim!
In prison I brave thee,
In chains defy!
Be thou accursed
Eternally!

Thy passion be thy punishment!
To God my love leads me:
The gates of heaven he 'll open,
But hell shall close o'er thee!

[*A jailer appears.* CLAUDE FROLLO *signs to him to lead out* ESMERALDA. *He exits while they drag forth the gypsy.*

SCENE II.

The area before Notre Dame; the front of the church. The sound of bells is heard.

QUASIMODO.

My God! I love,
Except myself,
All that 's here, —
The air which passes,
And which chases
Away care;
And the swallow
Who is faithful
To the old roof;
The chapels high
O'ershadowed by
The Holy Cross;
Every rose
That grows;
Every sight
Of delight!

Sad creature, I, —
Uncouth, ill-made!

None envies me!
This is life
As it is!
Darkest night,
Bluest sky,
What matters it?
Every door
Leads to God.
Ignoble scabbard,
Noble blade;
Fair my soul
God has made.

Ring, bells small and great, —
Ring on, ring on!
Mix well your voices,
Gruff and sweet!
In the turrets,
In the tower,
Sing your song!

How they ring!
With all their might,
Let them hum
Day and night!
Our festival shall be
Magnificent, I swear!
Assail it fiercer yet,
The palpitating air!
The stupid peasants run,
And o'er the bridges tear!

Let them ring,
Let them hum,
Day and night!

Every feast
Is increased
By their might!
[*He turns toward the front of the church.*
I saw black hangings in the chapel.
Are they dragging some misery here?
God! a presentiment! I'll not believe it!
[*Enter* CLAUDE FROLLO *and* CLOPIN *without perceiving* QUASIMODO.
It is my master! I'll observe him. He is gloomy too!
[*He hides himself in an obscure angle of the porch.*
Oh, my mistress! Oh, Notre Dame!
Take my life! save my soul!

SCENE III.

QUASIMODO *hidden*, CLAUDE FROLLO, CLOPIN.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

So Phœbus is at Montfort?

CLOPIN.

My lord, he is not dead!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Provided nothing brings him here!

CLOPIN.

Do not fear it;
He is too feeble yet for such a journey.
If he came, 't would be his death.
My lord, you can feel sure
That every step would reopen his wound;
Do not fear anything this morning.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Oh! let me hold her just to-day
For life or death within my power!
Hell! I'll give you all the rest,
If you grant me this one hour!
[*To* CLOPIN.] They will soon bring the gypsy here!
You remember everything!
In the square — with your men —

CLOPIN.

Yes.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Keep in the shadow;
If I cry, "To me!" you come.

CLOPIN.

Yes!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Have plenty with you!

CLOPIN.

If you cry, "To me!"

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Yes.

CLOPIN.

I rush to her,
I tear her from the King's men —

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Yes.

CLOPIN.

And give her to you.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Go, mix among the crowd,
And perhaps she
Will look upon the priest
More tenderly;
Then rush,—rush all of you—

CLOPIN.

Yes, my master!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Hold yourselves close!

CLOPIN.

Yes.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Hide your arms,
Not to excite suspicion!

CLOPIN.

Master, you shall see!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

But hell may take her quick,
With my good-will,
If now this insane creature
Refuses still!

Destiny! Oh, fatal stroke!
Friend, I count on thee!
On this my only chance I wait
With fierce anxiety.

CLOPIN.

Fear notning terrible, my lord,
Count faithfully on me.

And on this last and only chance
Rely courageously!

[*They go out hurriedly. The populace begin to enter the square.*

SCENE IV.

The populace; QUASIMODO; *afterward* ESMERALDA, *and her escort; then* CLAUDE FROLLO, PHŒBUS, CLOPIN FROUILLEFOU, *priests, archers, officers of the law.*

CHORUS.

To Notre Dame
Come, get a sight
Of the young woman
Who dies to-night!

This gypsy woman
Who stabbed, they say,
The handsomest officer
In the King's pay.

In vain did Heaven
Beauty lend her!
Is it possible —
God defend her! —
A soul so black,
An eye so tender!

A frightful thing,
Human nature is so!
The poor unfortunate!
Come, let us go

To Notre Dame
To get a sight
Of the young woman
Who dies to-night!

[*The crowd increases; noise; a gloomy procession begins to appear on the Place du Parvis. Rows of black penitents. Banners of La Miséricorde. Torches, archers, officers of the law and the watch. The soldiers disperse the crowd.* ESMERALDA *appears. She wears a chemise; a rope is around her neck; her feet are bare, and she is covered with a long black veil of crape. Following her, come the executioners and the King's officers. As the prisoner reaches the front of the church, a sombre chant is heard in the distance, coming from the interior of the church, whose doors are closed.*

CHORUS (*in the church*).

Omnes fluctus fluminis
Transierunt super me
In imo voraginis
Ubi plorant animæ.

[*The chant draws nearer. It bursts forth, at length, when near the doors, which open suddenly and discover the interior of the church. It is filled with a long procession of priests in their robes of ceremony; banners are borne before them.* CLAUDE FROLLO, *in sacerdotal costume, leads the procession. He goes toward the criminal.*

THE PEOPLE.

Alive to-day, to-morrow dead!
Heaven! thy wings around her spread!

ESMERALDA.

It is Phœbus who calls me
Unto our home eternal,

Where God will hold us in his arms,
Safe from misfortunes cruel.
Though plunged in the abyss of woe,
A joyful hope is given:
I am to die upon the earth
To be re-born in heaven!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

To die so young, so beautiful!
Alas! the guilty priest
Must suffer greater woe than she;
He ne'er will be released.
Oh, hapless child of sorrow,
Lost through my infamy,
You only die from off this earth,
While heaven is lost to me!

THE PEOPLE

Alas! she is an infidel.
God's words, unto us spoken,
Say that in heaven for such as she
No blessed gate shall open.
Death holds her fast, what misery!
She can escape it, never!
She dies unto the world this day,
And unto heaven forever!

[*The procession approaches.* CLAUDE *accosts* ESMERALDA.

ESMERALDA (*frozen with terror*).

It is the priest!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*low*).

Yes, it is I! I love you, I entreat you!
Say but one word! 'T is not too late;
I can yet save you!
Say, I love you!

ESMERALDA.

I abhor you! Go!

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Then die! I'll go where I can find you!

[CLAUDE *turns to the crowd.*

We deliver this woman to the secular arm;
At this solemn moment may the breath of the Lord
Pass over her soul!

[*As the officers of the law are about to seize* ESMERALDA, QUASIMODO *jumps into the square, thrusts back the archers, takes* ESMERALDA *in his arms, and throws himself with her into the church.*

QUASIMODO.

Sanctuary! sanctuary! sanctuary!

THE PEOPLE.

Sanctuary! sanctuary! sanctuary!
Rejoice, O people!
Hail to the good bell-ringer!
Oh, destiny!
The criminal
Belongs to heaven!
The scaffold falls!
The eternal God
Instead of a tomb
Discloses the altar!
Executioners, back!
King's officers, back!
This barrier
Limits your power.
Thou hast changed
Everything here.

The angels claim her;
She belongs to God!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*commanding silence by a gesture*).

She is not saved! She is a gypsy!
Notre Dame can save none but Christians!
Pagans are proscribed even when clasping the altar!
[*To the King's men.*] In the name of my lord the Archbishop of Paris,
I give you back this sinful woman!

QUASIMODO (*to the archers*).

I will defend her! I swear it.
Approach us not!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*to the archers*).

Do you hesitate?
Obey me, on the instant!
Tear the gypsy from this holy place.
[*The archers advance.* QUASIMODO *places himself between them and* ESMERALDA.

QUASIMODO

Never! [*A horseman is heard approaching. He calls out*:
Wait! [*The crowd disperses.*

PHŒBUS (*appearing on horseback. He is pale, breathless, exhausted as is a man who has made a long journey*).

Wait!

ESMERALDA.

Phœbus!

CLAUDE FROLLO (*aside, terrified*).

My plot has failed.

PHŒBUS (*leaping from his horse*).

God be praised! I breathe
And I arrive in time!
This girl is innocent.
Behold my assassin! [*Points to* CLAUDE FROLLO.

ALL.

Heavens! the priest!

PHŒBUS.

The priest alone is guilty, and I will prove it!
Arrest him!

THE PEOPLE.

Oh, wonder!
[*The archers surround* CLAUDE FROLLO.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

God alone is Master!

ESMERALDA.

Phœbus!

PHŒBUS.

Esmeralda!
[*They fall into each other's arms.*

ESMERALDA.

My adored Phœbus, we shall live!

PHŒBUS.

Thou shalt live!

ESMERALDA.

For us shines happiness!

THE PEOPLE.

Live, both of you!

ESMERALDA.

Hear these joyous shouts!
At thy feet receive me, humble girl!
Heavens! thou art pale! What is the matter?

PHŒBUS (*staggering*).

I die!
[*She catches him in her arms. Expectation and anxiety among the crowd.*
Each step I took toward you, my beloved,
Reopened my wound, that was hardly healed.
I have taken your grave and given you life.
I die! Destiny has avenged thee.
My angel, I go to see
If heaven is worth thy love!
Farewell! [*He dies.*

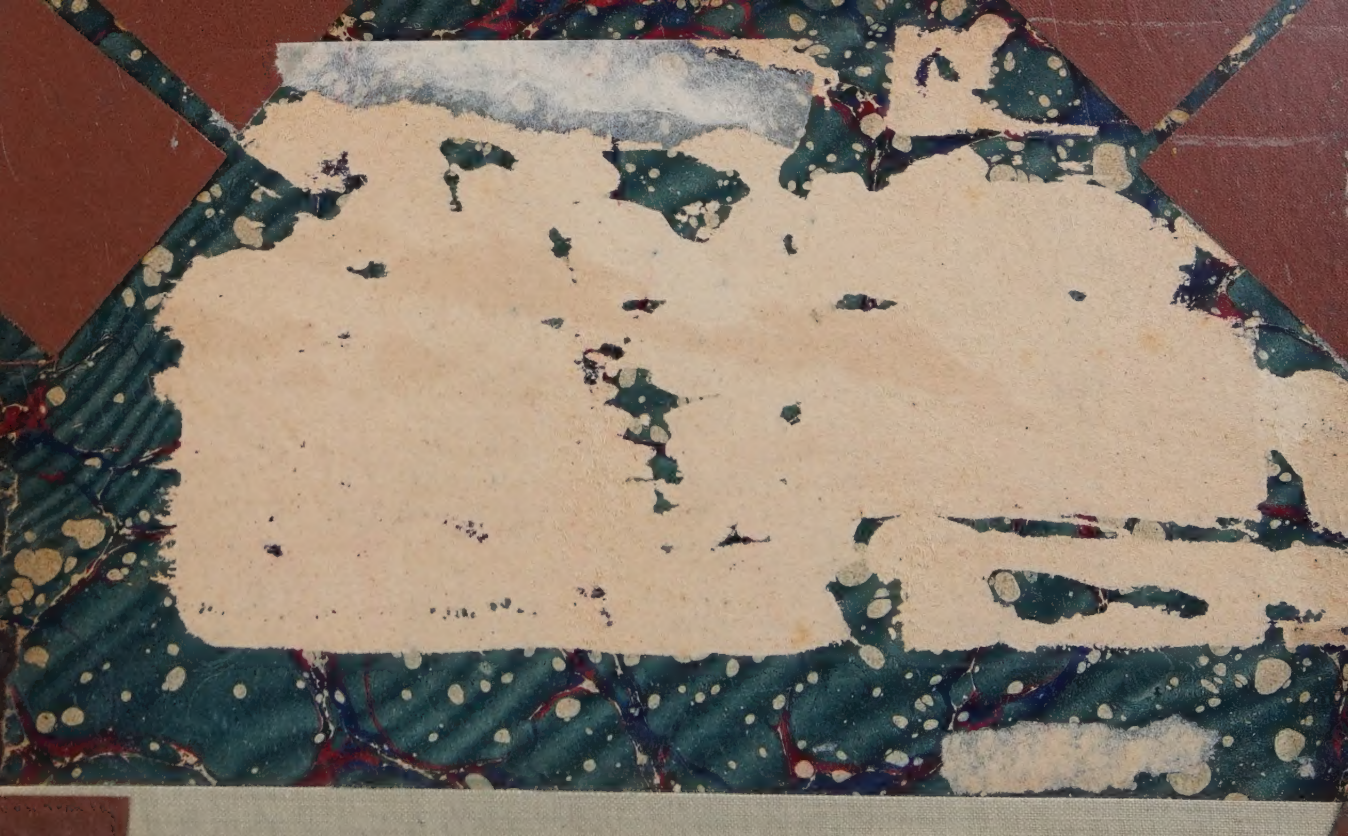
ESMERALDA.

Phœbus! He dies! In an instant everything is changed!
[*She falls upon his body.*
I follow you into eternity.

CLAUDE FROLLO.

Fatality!

THE PEOPLE.

Fatality!

THE END.